



THE ROUND WORLD SERIES

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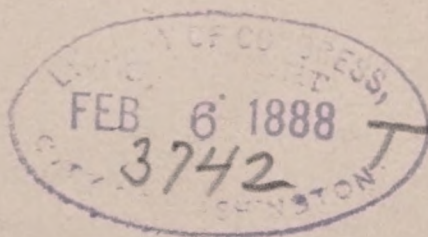
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.



PATIENCE PRESTON M D

BY

MRS A F RAFFENSPERGER



BOSTON
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PATIENCE PRESTON, M. D.

CHAPTER I.

THE HEART OF THE HILLS.

HOW long before we change cars, Patience?" The young woman addressed studied her time-table for a few moments, and replied, "Nearly an hour. Are you getting tired, mother?"

"I shall be very glad to rest a little while, Patience. I hope we shall have time enough to buy our tickets and re-check our trunks before the train leaves on the other road."

Again the time-table was consulted, but with unsatisfactory results. "I don't find a word about the other road, mother."

"Never mind; we can learn all that is necessary at the ticket office. But is not this a wonderful region of country, Patience?"

Wonderful it certainly was. The train was winding in and out along a tiny stream that threaded its way between the hills which towered sometimes in masses of rock hundreds of feet perpendicularly above the railroad, and which often seemed to present an impenetrable barrier as it drew nearer. But just when the engine appeared about to bury itself head-first in the side of the mountain, a narrow valley was disclosed to view, a sharp curve was made, and, lo! another picture of beauty and of grandeur. And all the time the cars were climbing higher and higher. One felt it in the labored motion of the train, which seemed to be straining and tugging like a thing of life.

Patience looked out of the window; then she turned and glanced apprehensively at her mother's face.

"Yes, it is very beautiful. But you are completely worn out, mother. You look very tired. Let me give you a little wine."

Certainly there were tears in the mother's eyes; but the eyes showed evident familiarity with tears.

"Don't, mother! Here, drink this wine. Now eat a cracker."

The mother made an effort to comply. There was a pitiful attempt to conceal her tears, or at least to bid them back to their source, but she was only partially successful. Patience looked out of the window again.

“O, mother! look at those rocks. They almost seem like walls piled by human hands. Can you see the moss and ferns by the road? I never saw anything so wonderful. And that little waterfall—is it not lovely? There’s another; just a ribbon of water floating down over the mossy rocks.”

Patience was doing her best to interest her mother, and to divert her thoughts from her sorrow. Mrs. Preston understood the loving device and tried to appear interested. Meanwhile the train hurried on, turning now to the right, now to the left, and all the time climbing up and still upward.

At length they skirted the borders of a miniature lake, which sparkled and glowed in its setting of green trees, and tossed itself in tiny waves. The conductor entered the car and announced, “Eagle’s Mere,” and was immediately succeeded by a brakeman who also shouted “Eagle’s Mere,”

"The Lake of the Eagles," said Mrs. Preston. "Now I see the appropriateness of the name. I did not suppose there could be a lake so high up in the mountains."

Meanwhile the two ladies gathered up their belongings and left the car, for here they were to take another road.

They hurried to the ticket office, and quietly waited their turn to be served by the somewhat surly ticket agent. He was evidently a man of few words, and those few were spoken as if under protest. He apparently regarded the travelling public as having only one set and fixed purpose, a determination to annoy him. He answered the questions addressed to him with such an air of lofty condescension that the inquirer was a brave man who would pursue his investigations to any considerable extent.

Mrs. Preston finally made her way into the immediate presence of this high and mighty power.

"When does the train leave for Piedmont?"

"To-morrow."

"Is there no train this evening?"

"To-morrow," he repeated sternly, and waved her away from the window.

She rejoined her daughter.

“We cannot go any further this evening, Patience ; we must find a hotel.”

“Well, mother, you sit down and rest, and I will ask about a hotel.”

Mrs. Preston obeyed wearily, and looked at the pushing, crowding, impatient, tired throng of travellers. She wondered vaguely where they all came from, and whither they were journeying. Had they left happy homes behind them? Were they eagerly hastening towards friends and home? Or were they, like herself, “strangers and pilgrims”?

Her thoughts reverted to her own sorrows. She tried to put aside the sad memories that rushed unbidden into her mind. But she felt so utterly lonely and forlorn, in that strange place, weary and travel-worn!

It was well Patience came in just then, or Mrs. Preston must have given way to a paroxysm of grief. She had drawn her heavy veil over her eyes, which were dim with tears.

“Mother, I have found a very nice, quiet home-like hotel, only a few steps away. I have engaged a room and ordered supper. Here comes

the porter for our hand-bags," and she handed him her luggage.

"We will leave our trunks here, mother."

They walked the short distance to the hotel, and were at once shown to a cosy room on the second floor.

Mrs. Preston looked around approvingly.

"I am very glad we could not go on to-night," she said, as she sank wearily into an easy chair.

Patience threw aside her hat and gloves.

"Now, mother, let me help you;" and she untied the bonnet strings, took off the loose travelling wrap her mother wore, and unbuttoned her boots.

"Put on these slippers, mother," bringing a pair out of her bag. "Now I will bathe your face and brush your hair, and then we will have our tea brought up into the room. I am sure you will feel better after you drink a cup of tea and eat some toast." But as she busied herself lovingly about her mother, she looked apprehensive and worried.

The supper was brought, and Mrs. Preston made an effort to drink the tea, but could not.

"Please try, mother," said Patience,

"Indeed, my dear child, I cannot."

"Well, never mind. Perhaps it will be better for you to go to bed and sleep. I am going to give you some bromide to quiet you."

"It is very comforting to take one's physician along when travelling," said Mrs. Preston, smiling.

Patience responded pleasantly, and assisted her mother in undressing. When she had taken the bromide and was finally settled in bed, Patience sat down by the open window, and looked out upon the little lake that was now reflecting the red rays of the setting sun. She glanced alternately at her mother and at the beautiful view outside of her window. Finally her mother slept, but not restfully and quietly. Her face grew flushed. She tossed and moaned, and occasionally muttered words that made Patience close her lips tightly together, and frown ominously.

"Is there nothing that can purchase absolute forgetfulness, even in sleep? Poor mother! Asleep or awake, the same memories and visions haunt her. It is wrong; it is unjust; it is cruel! Why must she suffer so, through no fault of her own?"

Patience Preston, M. D., was naturally a very self-contained and self-reliant young woman, and

her avocation had strengthened these traits of character. But the circumstances in which she was now situated would have been trying to one older and stronger than she. As the hours of the night wore on she saw her mother was growing worse, and all her professional resources seemed useless. She took one remedy after another from her medicine case, and tried everything that suggested itself to her as at all likely to benefit her patient; but long before morning her heart sunk within her as she was forced to confess to herself that her mother had brain fever.

And here they were, strangers, alone! No wonder the hours dragged wearily by, though Patience forgot that she had been wearied by long travel, and no thought of sleep crossed her mind. She busied herself by her mother's bedside, putting napkins wet in cold water, on the burning forehead, bathing the hot hands, and fanning the fevered face. Then she walked to the window, rolled up the shade, and looked out into the quiet night. A full moon silvered the little lake. How beautiful it was, how peaceful!

But the sight did not quiet Patience's perturbed mind.

“Cold and calm and cruel. What does Nature care for aching and breaking hearts? What sympathy has she for our sorrows? What help for our weakness? What suggestion for our perplexities? The moon shines as radiantly as if her rays did not fall on thousands of sorrowing souls; as if she did not look down on tragedies and tears! I can’t abide it!” and she drew down the shade and turned to her mother’s bedside.

“Patience, Patience!” called her mother, gazing wildly around the room.

“Here I am, mother dear,” and she put her cool firm hand on her mother’s forehead.

“I thought he was here, Patience. Has he been here? Is he coming, oh! is he coming?”

The daughter’s face grew stern and hard.

“We are alone, mother. Take this ice-water, and then try to sleep.”

But already the mind of the sufferer was wandering far away from her present surroundings, and Patience was forced to listen to words that wrung her heart, and moans that she could not forbear echoing, till it seemed as if her own brain would reel and give way.

So the night dragged on, but not once, through

all its dreadful hours, did Patience Preston kneel to ask aid or sympathy from the loving Master whose ear would have heard her faintest whisper. She did not believe in Him. She did not care for His assistance.

CHAPTER II.

UNEXPECTEDLY DETAINED.

JUST before daybreak Mrs. Preston seemed resting more easily, and Patience threw herself down on the lounge. She thought she could not sleep, but she was tired, body and soul, and almost as soon as her head touched the pillow she was asleep, and so gained strength for the coming day. Fortunately she was not aroused for two or three hours—not until some one rapped at her door to announce that breakfast was ready for passengers on the Piedmont train.

“Tell the landlord to come up to my room,” Patience said to the boy who had rapped at the door.

In course of time the landlord made his appearance.

“My mother has been taken very ill since we came, and we cannot leave to-day. I think she

will not be able to go for several days. Can you allow us to keep this room?"

The landlord looked perplexed.

"I don't like to have sickness in my house. It hurts business, you know. I hope she hasn't nothing catching?"

Patience made haste to explain that her mother had neither small-pox nor whooping-cough, nor any other contagious disease. She had been in great trouble, and was worn out with anxiety and travel.

"I am sorry for both of you, indeed I be," and the man's kindly face proved the truth of his assertion, "and if you'll send out for Dr. Graham to see your mother, and he says it's not catching, why, then you can stay and welcome, if —"

"Yes, I can pay you in advance, if you wish;" and Patience took out her well-filled pocket-book.

"No, indeed; not at all necessary. Shall I send for Dr. Graham?"

"But I am a doctor myself, and I don't think it necessary to send for him."

"You! A doctor!" and the landlord looked incredulously at the youthful face and trim figure before him. He seemed to think her brain was affected, also.

“Yes; I am a doctor. Probably you are not accustomed to seeing women who practice medicine?”

“No, that’s a fact: and,” he added candidly, “I shouldn’t have much opinion of ’em, neither.”

“Well, send for Dr. Graham, then — and have my breakfast sent up to me,” she added hastily, as she heard her mother moan and call, “Patience.”

Breakfast came, and so, after a time, did Dr. Graham. He was a physician of the old school — dignified, courtly, ponderous. He held out his gloved hand to Patience as he entered, and then walked directly to the bed on which Mrs. Preston was now tossing restlessly.

“Give me your hand, Madam!” and he took her wrist between his fingers; he had withdrawn his glove for the purpose. Patience stood gravely beside him.

“Ah! Um! Great excitement of the circulation. High fever. Tendency to cerebral inflammation.”

“Let me explain, Doctor, that my mother has had great trouble lately — anxiety and nervous shock — and the added fatigue of travel has broken her down. I think the symptoms indicate brain

fever. I have given her bromide during the night, also Dover's powders, and have kept cold applications to her head."

The doctor bowed gallantly. "You are a young woman of excellent judgment. A physician could hardly do more than you have done—in fact, I will prescribe a continuance of the same treatment. I am glad to see our patient has so competent a nurse." He bowed again, most politely.

"I am a physician myself, or I should not have ventured to prescribe," said Patience quietly.

Dr. Graham had committed himself both to her diagnosis and treatment, but he looked, at this announcement, as if he wished he had not. Patience could read his face. It said, plainly enough: "This young woman a doctor! Oh! the degeneracy of the times. Women are lovely in their proper sphere, but when they set up to practice medicine they are ridiculous and positively dangerous."

"Very well," he said coolly; "then I suppose you do not wish for my services?"

"If I had not wanted you I certainly should not have sent for you," said Patience with spirit. "I recognized the gravity of my mother's condition,

and I wished for counsel. And it is satisfactory to know that a practitioner of so much skill and eminence agrees with me," and she smiled gravely.

Dr. Graham was susceptible to such delicate flattery, and he looked quite amiable.

"Please to call again this evening, Dr. Graham. And will you, on your way down, assure the landlord that my mother has no contagious disease, and so set his mind at rest on that point?"

Dr. Graham drew on his gloves with great deliberation, took his hat and gold-headed cane in his hand, and left the room with a most dignified and gracious bow.

"Just like all the rest of his sex," was the mental comment of Patience. "As long as he saw in me only an unsophisticated young girl, a stranger, alone with my sick mother, he doubtless felt very chivalrous, and brimful of good will and all that sort of thing, but when I made myself known as a woman who had a definite work in the world, and who proposed to do it, then he was up in arms at once. But I intend to follow out my chosen course of life regardless of Dr. Graham and all who are like him — yes, and in spite of them, too."

Nevertheless, in the trying week that followed,

Patience was many times glad that she had the experience and skill of Dr. Graham to fall back upon in the stern conflict between life and death. It needed not even so practiced an eye as hers to discern that it was a hand-to-hand fight, and many times the issue was extremely doubtful.

Dr. Graham, on his part, seemed to forget that Patience was an M. D., and, therefore, in his candid opinion, an unsexed woman as well as a possible, though of course harmless, rival. She was a young woman, with a dying mother—or a mother who was in great danger—and among strangers. Her forlorn condition appealed to his sympathy, and he grew to look upon her with almost fatherly fondness. He shared with her the watching by night, realizing as well as Patience did the need of constant and careful attention, and that it would be unsafe to trust the patient to unskilled nursing.

It was fortunate that the sick-room was in a remote and quiet wing of the hotel. After the landlord had been assured by Dr. Graham that Mrs. Preston's disease was not "catching," and, possibly, influenced somewhat by the well-filled purse he had seen, — for it is in human nature to be

thus influenced, — he was kindness itself, and insisted that Patience should call upon him or the servants whenever anything was needed for the patient's comfort.

Gradually Mrs. Preston's illness became known to the few boarders in the hotel, and also to the people of the town, and many delicate little tokens of sympathy and kindness came to the sick room, which quite won the heart of the anxious and lonely watcher. Flowers were sent in abundance, and scarcely a day passed but a servant from some of the Eagle's Mere families appeared with a daintily-arranged salver on which was some tempting delicacy for the sick woman, and a message of kindly inquiry and proffered assistance.

Patience was growing fond of these people whom she had never seen, and was beginning to ask herself why she should not stay among them, and begin anew her life-work at Eagle's Mere.

CHAPTER III.

A FRIEND MADE.

WELL, I am happy to say that I consider your mother quite out of danger this morning, Miss Preston," announced Dr. Graham some two weeks after his first visit.

"I am very glad to hear you say so, Dr. Graham, because it confirms my own impression."

"I beg your pardon ; I had forgotten that you claim to be a physician yourself ;" and there was an almost imperceptible sound of sarcasm in his voice. "I suppose you are also an advocate of woman suffrage, and all the other advanced theories of the day ?"

"I am almost ashamed to say, Dr. Graham, that I have been so busy studying medicine that I have given little time or thought to that fearful heresy you suppose me to advocate ;" laughed Patience pleasantly.

"Indeed !" Dr. Graham lifted his shaggy eye-

brows incredulously. "I thought the two things went together."

"Dr. Graham, please listen to me! When I was very young I had a great desire to study medicine. As I grew older my mother encouraged me in my inclination. She sent me to a good school till I was fitted to enter a medical college. Then I went to the Philadelphia Women's Medical College and took a thorough course. I graduated, and have the diploma of the college. Now, circumstances make it necessary for me to practice. Can you—can any reasonable man—see any good and sufficient reason why I should not follow my profession? I do not expect a general practice, but surely there is a wide field for a medical woman among the sick of her own sex, and the little children whose natural nurse she is."

Dr. Graham was silent, but not convinced. The next question he had not anticipated.

"What do you think of my settling here?"

It was a hard question for him to answer. Professionally, as a man and a physician, he would rather Patience Preston would go to Halifax, if she so desired. But as a friend, and as a man

who had all chivalrous and kindly impulses deep down in his soul, he could not discourage this brave little woman in her effort to win a reputation, and a livelihood, right here, under his professional nose. Perhaps his reply was even more encouraging than he really intended it, for just at that moment a vision of his own cherished darling, sweet, and helpless, and sheltered, came before his mind. What if she were in the place of Patience?

“Try it, Miss Patience!”

“Will you stand by me?”

If Dr. Graham had been told one month before that he would have committed himself to stand by and give moral and practical countenance to a “female doctor,” as he was prone to term the class, somewhat contemptuously, he would have indignantly scorned the possibility of such an act. Yet, when Patience Preston, M. D., looked directly into his face with her clear gray eyes, and asked him this straightforward question, he did not hesitate one moment.

“I will,” he responded heartily; and he was the kind of a man to keep his promise.

Patience really did not expect so cordial a reply.

She knew his opinion of her, not as a woman, but as a woman out of her appropriate sphere, and she was surprised when he promised his countenance and support.

"Then, if mother approves, I think I shall soon find an office, and hang out my sign."

"And I hope, my dear young friend, you will be successful beyond your brightest anticipations," responded Dr. Graham. Having consented to stand sponsor for Miss Preston, he at once began to feel a lively interest in her future career.

Mrs. Preston spoke feebly, from her bed, to which she was yet confined, "What are you discussing so earnestly?"

"The feasibility — or rather advisability — of hanging out my shingle in Eagle's Mere," said Patience, sitting down beside her mother and taking her thin white hand in her own.

"What does Dr. Graham think?"

Mrs. Preston evidently had come to hold Dr. Graham's opinion in great regard.

"He thinks well of the plan, and has promised me his support."

"I could not refuse such a persevering young woman, when she asked me. Besides, I have had

opportunity to judge of her skill in your sick room, and, be assured, I have formed a high opinion of her attainments ;” and he made one of his old-fashioned, formal bows toward the young doctor.

“Thank you,” said Patience pleasantly.

Dr. Graham bowed himself out of the room, after promising to call again, in a friendly, rather than professional way, quite soon.

“There, I wonder if I have made an old fool of myself,” was his mental query as soon as he was out of doors. “What will the Medical Society say when they learn that I have endorsed a woman doctor? They would have done the same if they had been in my place. There is something very compelling in those clear gray eyes of hers. Hang it! I’ve said I’d stand by her, and I will, Medical Society or no Medical Society!” And Dr. Graham brought his gold-headed cane down with unwonted emphasis on the brick pavement as he asserted his determination to abide by his compact.

On his way down town he met the landlord.

“Good-morning, Doctor! Have you been to see our patient?”

“Yes; and she is improving rapidly. By the way, Miss Patience is a remarkable young woman.

And she is a regular graduate of a medical college ; she thinks of opening an office here, and I have promised to speak a good word for her. I hope if your wife or children need to call in a physician you will give her a fair trial," said the doctor. He was going to carry out his promise so unexpectedly made.

The landlord laughed boisterously.

"Nothing like speaking in season, Dr. Graham. I am a bachelor as yet, but I will mention the matter to my wife as soon as I find her." As the man was on the wintry side of fifty, there did not seem much prospect that Dr. Preston would have a call for her professional services very soon in that quarter.

The news spread, however, as almost any news will, in a small town, — sometimes even in towns of greater pretensions, — and before Patience Preston was known by sight to the people of Eagle's Mere it was well understood that she was a "woman doctor," and was to take up her abode in that mountain town.

CHAPTER IV.

EAGLE'S MERE.

MRS. PRESTON rallied very slowly. She seemed like a woman who had no incentive to make any effort to get well. Or rather, it was as if it would be much easier for her to slip out of life than to take up again its duties and its burdens. But she never complained; she was sweet and thoughtful towards her constant nurse and companion, Patience, who, on her part, was untiring in her devotion.

"Patience," said Mrs. Preston one morning, "it is a beautiful bright day, and you ought to go out for a walk. You have been shut up too long with me; and, if you are going to rent an office here, you might look around for a suitable place this morning."

"I wish you were able to go out with me, mother."

"Don't you think I soon will be?"

Patience stooped down to kiss her mother's pale cheek, and answered softly, —

“Yes ; if you will only try.”

“And, Patience, while you are out you might call at the post-office.”

“It is not worth while, mother. No one knows we are here.”

“Did you not write while I was so ill ?”

“No, mother. It would have been of no use.”

Mrs. Preston sighed, and her worn, patient face took on an added shade of sorrow, but she made no reply.

Patience busied herself in arranging everything that would be necessary for her mother's comfort while she was away, then she put on her hat.

“Good-by, poor mother ! I'll not be gone very long. Perhaps you will go with me next time if you try very, very hard to gain strength. For my sake, mother ! You know how much I need you.”

She kissed her tenderly, and went out.

Mrs. Preston allowed a few tears to roll silently down her face ; then she seemed to make a sudden resolution. She slipped out of bed, very slowly, and with much apparent effort. Steadying her weak footsteps by the aid of chair and table, she

made her way to the wardrobe and found her loose wrapper, which she put on. From her trunk she produced writing materials and, seating herself by the table, wrote a short letter. She directed it, sealed and stamped it, and then, after putting it out of sight in her Bible, she drew her chair to the window and sat down to wait her daughter's return.

The effort was certainly beneficial. Her cheeks had a tinge of color in them, very faint indeed, still an improvement on the death-like pallor of the past few days, since the fever had ceased to flush them. She looked out of the window for the first time since she had come to Eagle's Mere. The little lake sparkled joyously in the clear morning sunshine. The foliage was luxuriant and green, in the highest degrees. In the distance, beyond the lake, hill rose above hill, till, as far as the eye could reach, towered a purple mountain range. Scattered among the near and remote hills, Mrs. Preston noted pleasant-looking homes and cultivated fields. The whole outlook soothed her crushed and bleeding soul.

"Father, I thank Thee for this beautiful world, and for all the abundant evidences that Thou dost

care for Thy creatures ! Help me not to distrust Thee ; and may I never cease to feel that Thou wilt make all things, yes, all things, all things," — she repeated, emphasizing that comforting word "all," as so many of us have done in our direst needs, — "all things work together for my good." She was silent a moment, then spoke again, very softly, as if she feared some one might hear her whispered words. "Thou wilt make all things work together for our good, dear Father ! Even our mistakes and our wrong doing ! If we love Thee, — and do we not love Thee, even though we have sinned and strayed far from Thee ?"

Patience entered very quietly just then.

"You dear blessed mother ! I expected to find you asleep, and here you are sitting by the window, and a tiny bit of a rose on your cheeks."

"Thanks to my doctor, and the Master."

"Do you mean Dr. Graham or Dr. Preston ?"

Patience ignored the allusion to the Divine Healer.

"I mean Patience Preston, M. D. Now tell me about your walk."

"I can't begin to tell you what an odd, quaint, old-fashioned, quiet place Eagle's Mere is. There are parts of it that seem transported bodily from

England ; and if I had been dropped down from the clouds into some of these localities I should have thought I was in old Chester, or some other English town. I found a courtyard, into which a narrow alley led me, that was deliciously quaint. On one side was an old brick house—a man working near said the bricks were brought from England—that was once, years and years ago, a hotel. It had formerly wide porches, but they have fallen from age. There was a wing, or extension, built of hewn logs, and a door was open, so that I could see a broad fireplace and a mantel of black wood that was much higher than my head.

“On another side of the paved courtyard was an old stone building that seemed to have once been a blacksmith’s shop. On the two other sides were old sheds and stables. The whole affair is too delightful for anything. You must go with me to see it as soon as you can.”

“Did you see any place that would be suitable for an office?”

“I saw several vacant houses, but you know we must consult our pockets.”

“Yes, dear.”

“I asked several questions about rent, and find

that much depends on location. For some occult reason, certain parts of the town were considered much more desirable and aristocratic than other parts. Rents are high in the favored portions ; elsewhere I think they are low."

"Would it not be well to consult Dr. Graham?"

"Yes ; and then our ability."

"But so much may depend upon your location, Patience."

"Yes, I know ; but I am a very poor doctor if I talk my first patient in Eagle's Mere to death. Now you must lie down, mother."

Mrs. Preston improved rapidly after that morning, and was soon able to take short walks with Patience. She, too, was favorably impressed with the quaint, quiet old town, and as soon as her strength permitted, she engaged in house-hunting with much interest.

Eagle's Mere was a typical town in that region of country, but was quite unlike any place Mrs. Preston had ever known before. Certain well-defined but intangible and invisible lines divided the town and the people. Those limits and boundaries were as accurately drawn as the equator or the polar circles, and the social zones thus consti-

tuted were not allowed to run into each other or infringe upon each other. It made all the difference in the world—or, to speak practically, all the difference in the rent—which side of the boundary one fixed one's habitation. In the region between the equator and the tropics—the social torrid zone, where the dwellers perspired and grew dusty and grimy and rough of hand and manners at their daily labor—there was often an ambition to get into the social temperate zone, the region of the middle class. But few of either class were so sanguine as to attempt crossing the social polar circles; the atmosphere was too frigid for them, and their reception would have been chilling to the last degree.

It would have puzzled a philosopher from another region to have divined what constituted a patent of social nobility in the town, except the fact of dwelling within certain fixed limits. To the credit of Eagle's Mere, be it said that wealth had nothing to do with the matter. The people recognized the fact that money was vastly convenient to have and to handle, but it alone did not give an "open sesame" to the charmed circle. It was sometimes claimed that education, culture, re-

finement, gave one admittance. But while the residents of that frigid zone prided themselves upon their polish, and coolly relegated to their own place "those other people," as they always spoke of the inhabitants outside their polar circle, still it was quite feasible for a stranger, about whose ancestry and antecedents nothing was known, to take prominent place among the people who so prided themselves on culture and refinement, yet to murder the King's English in the most cold-blooded manner. But if he bought or rented within the fixed limits, and if he observed certain proprieties — if he lifted his hat at the proper angle, and did not eat with his knife, or allow his teaspoon to stand in his cup of tea or coffee, but placed it decorously in his saucer — then he was generously taken into full fellowship, and was considered as good as the best. This was the law for the stranger within the gates of Eagle's Mere. For the old residents the law was entirely different.

After all, it was purely a matter of tradition and first family. The social standing of the Eagle's Mere father fixed that of his children even unto the third and fourth generation. But if one's father was unknown, and if one boldly located

one's self amidst the best class of Eagle's Mere people, they were not disposed to be too exacting or inquisitive.

This state of affairs had its advantages. While it separated the people into classes, it also united the members of the different classes, and, especially among the refined and cultivated, society was really delightful.

All this by way of understanding how important it was that Patience Preston, M. D., should make no mistake in locating herself and her office.

Meanwhile, Mrs. Preston made several quiet trips to the post-office, unknown to Patience, and at length was rewarded by the reception of a letter which she took to the hotel and read while Patience was away. Patience did not understand why her mother was so restless and feverish that night.

"I am afraid you have exerted yourself too much, mother," she said anxiously. "You must take some bromide."

The drug never was made that would reach her case, but she tried to feign sleep, and so quiet her daughter's anxiety.

CHAPTER V.

A NEW HOME.

AT last a house was rented, according to the best light Mrs. Preston and Patience could procure upon the important subject, and also, it must be conceded, according to the amount of rent they felt justified in promising to pay.

It was a small house ; there was no point of view from which it could be imagined either spacious or lofty or even picturesque. It was a tiny white cottage, with a wing fronting the street, that would make a very pleasant office. That must be the principal room. Its furnishing must be as good and appropriate as possible. It made little difference about the rest of the house—at least Mrs. Preston thought so. Patience felt quite differently.

“ Mother, if we only had what belongs to you ! It really does belong to you, and you ought to

have it. How comfortable we could make ourselves here if you had the half of it ! ”

“ Patience, dear, your father’s daughter certainly would not have had me do otherwise than I did in giving up everything ! We shall be very nicely fixed here, I am sure, and quite comfortable.”

“ I was not thinking of myself, mother ; I am young and strong ; but it is all wrong for you to have to endure so much. I am not even disposed to try to be reconciled to it. I see the injustice of it, and no amount of reasoning or argument, or even Scriptural quotation, can make me think black is white.”

“ Hear this, Patience ! ” Mrs. Preston took up a small book lying near her, and read :

“ Perhaps, when all life’s lessons have been learned,
And moon and stars forevermore have set,
The things which in our weakness here we spurned,
The things o’er which we grieved, with eyelids wet,
May flash before us out of life’s dark night
As stars shine most in skies of darkest blue,
And we shall see how all God’s ways were right,
And how what seemed reproof was love most true.”

“ Very beautiful poetry,” said Patience ; “ but how about the practical prose of to-day ? I don’t

want to wait till the moon and stars have set forever before I see the justice and injustice of things. And what is wrong to-day can't be right when all the suns and moons and stars in the universe have gone down for the last time."

"No; but there are two sides to everything, and we may be better able, after the fogs and mists of this life have cleared away, to see the other side."

"And what good will it do then?"

"It ought to make us lenient in our judgments now," said Mrs. Preston, with a sigh.

Patience was beside her mother in a moment. She knelt by her and clasped her strong young arms around her mother's slender figure.

"I didn't mean to make you feel badly, mother, indeed I did not. Do forgive me!"

Mrs. Preston kissed her daughter's forehead. "At least we must never let anything come between our two selves, Patience."

The office was finally furnished, and had quite a professional look. The floor, which fortunately was very smooth, Patience oiled and polished. There was a south window, broad and low, and also two east windows. Opposite the south window was a low bookcase running the whole length

of the room. This was made by a carpenter, under Patience's direction, and then she stained it a bright cherry color. It held quite a goodly array of books, and also had vacant space for many more. It was one of Patience's ambitions to see it filled.

On the other side of the room, opposite the east window, was an open fireplace that could be used for either coal or wood. This quite took the heart of Mrs. Preston, and she planned a plain chimney-piece of wood, with side brackets, to stand on the mantel. The carpenter was again set to work, and when he finished his part of the labor Patience took the pine structure in hand and stained it a bright cherry like the bookcase. The old mantel was sand-papered till the discolored paint was removed, and then it, too, received a cherry finish. When completed the result was very satisfactory to both of the women.

There was a table in the centre of the room. It also was of pine, but stained with the cherry dye, and over it Patience put a pretty table cover that was a relic of days departed. The chairs were common, "splint-seated" ones, of various and sundry shapes, but all very comfortable, and

these also were stained with the cheerful cherry color.

There were plain shades at the windows, a rug or two on the floor, a serviceable-looking lamp, and a few papers and magazines on the table.

Such was the interior of Dr. Preston's office, and when finally completed Mrs. Preston and Patience were quite satisfied.

"You can have some plants in that south window, Patience," said her mother, "and a bird to hang in it."

"And a respectable-looking old cat to sleep on the rug before the fire," said Patience, laughing; "that would complete the picture, don't you think?"

"You can't keep the cat and the bird both," said Mrs. Preston.

"Yes, I presume it would be extravagant for a young doctor to start out with both."

"I mean the cat would eat the bird —"

"And then starve to death, mother? Well, I expect it will be some time before I shall have a great rush of practice. I think I'll not need to keep an office boy — I mean an office girl — for several weeks, at least."

"Well, we are not entirely dependent on your profession, Patience."

Patience looked at her mother inquiringly.

"My child, did you suppose I was quite oblivious of you and your needs?"

"It does not matter about me, but I am glad if you have reserved anything for yourself, mother."

"Patience, you too have claims upon me. It makes little difference in regard to myself; my life is in the past. Yours is before you. For your sake I would like to live a little longer, to care for you till some one else will take you off my hands," she said, slightly smiling.

"Then you'll live as long as I do. I intend to make my own way in the world. I never would marry for a home, and I am very skeptical about love. I have lived beyond the age of romance."

Away back in her early girlhood Patience had her sweet dream — the fancies that came to budding womanhood. Her knight, as she fondly thought him, had appeared to her, and she had trusted him entirely and given her young heart fully to him. But, by and by, the glamour was dispelled, and she found her knight an arrant craven; her idol but commonest clay.

Probably this experience had much to do with her adopting a profession. Perhaps but for it she might not now, in Eagle's Mere, be hanging out her modest sign: "Patience Preston, M. D."

But there it hung, swinging in the fresh mountain wind and creaking a little sadly, so Patience thought.

The same day, or evening, the Evening Star, which professed to be a daily sheet, but which people were wont to say was "weakly," had, under the "New Advertisements," this card:—

"Patience Preston, M. D., offers her professional services to the women and children of Eagle's Mere and vicinity. Office No. 27 High Street."

The Luminary, which illuminated only once a week, held the same card. And now Dr. Preston was ready for her life-work.

While she waited for patients she busied herself in helping Mrs. Preston furnish and arrange the other rooms of the cottage. There were no superfluities, but under the facile fingers of mother and daughter the tiny cottage grew to look quite homelike and cosey.

"We may be very happy here, mother."

"God grant it," said Mrs. Preston.

CHAPTER VI.

THE HOP.

THE Hop was the dearest, most cherished social institution of Eagle's Mere. It was a mild but very pleasant dissipation, participated in by the young people and the young married people alike. Nor was it a mixed company that met in this agreeable manner. Everybody was invited, of course, but "everybody" meant only those fortunate people who lived within certain defined limits of social latitude and longitude.

A Hop was in progress one evening soon after Dr. Preston took possession of her unpretending office. The orchestra was playing a waltz, and a score or two of the young people were whirling gayly around the floor.

Standing by an open window was a group gathered to enjoy the cool air, and engaged in animated conversation.

“Have you seen the new doctor, Mr. Dearborn?” asked a laughing young girl of her companion.

“No indeed. Who is he?”

“Didn’t you see the card in the papers last week — Patience Preston, M. D.?”

“Patience! Why, that is a woman’s name, Miss Alice.”

“Precisely. And the new doctor is a woman, and a young woman, too.”

“Is she pretty, Miss Alice?” Mr. Dearborn asked the question with languid curiosity.

“Indeed, I can hardly tell you. She has flashed by me several times on her morning walks, which she seems to take with great regularity. I have caught glimpses of straight brows, clear gray eyes, transparent complexion, a well-poised head, and a figure of medium size. The impression made upon me is, that she must be a cultivated and very self-reliant young woman.”

“Is that all, Miss Alice? I am interested in your remarks.”

“You mean that you are interested in the subject of them, Mr. Dearborn.”

“How delightful to have such a charming creature for one’s physician! Think of her soft, cool white

hand on one's burning forehead! I declare, I do not feel at all well. I think I am going to be ill! Take me home and send for Dr. Preston."

"It will do no good, Mr. Dearborn. She offers her services only to women and children," replied Miss Alice.

"What were you saying, Miss Alice?" queried another young man in the circle. "Did you remark that Providence made special provision for idiots and infants?"

"I might have said so, but I didn't."

"In which case Dearborn might have some chance;" this was the young man's aside.

"So you think Miss Dr. Preston would not take pity on my suffering?" continued Mr. Dearborn. The subject seemed to amuse him greatly.

"Not unless she takes your extreme youth into consideration," replied the young woman, and Mr. Dearborn was silenced for a moment.

"Do you never dance, Mr. Forrest?" asked Miss Alice, turning to a young man standing near, who had not taken active part in the pleasures of the evening, but who seemed to be listening with great interest to the conversation that had just taken place.

"No, Miss Alice. That part of my early education was neglected. I suppose I had not intellect enough to learn. But I enjoy looking at those who can dance well," he added frankly, "only" — and he hesitated a moment — "only I think I should not exactly like my sister, or wife, if I had one, to waltz."

"Quite an old fogey," laughed Miss Alice.

"I admit it ; but please tell me about this Dr. Preston."

"I can tell you nothing more."

"Mr. Forrest, my father attended Mrs. Preston during her illness at the hotel last month, and he says the young woman is charming." It was Miss Graham who spoke.

"Your father is well known to be very susceptible, Miss Graham," said Mr. Forrest, smiling. "But if the young woman is a physician, why did she not prescribe for her mother herself? Is she a regularly graduated physician?"

"Father said some of the boarders at the hotel were afraid the sick woman had a contagious disease, small-pox or something, and they would not rest till father was called in. To tell the truth, he had great prejudice against 'women

doctors' as he calls them, and he said he was almost rude to Miss Preston at first, when she coolly told him she was a graduate in medicine herself."

"I fancy he could not be rude to any mortal woman," said Mr. Forrest.

"But father says that he came to have very great respect for Miss Preston's attainments and skill, and he is going to do all he can for her, professionally, to give her a start."

Others were drawn into the conversation. The waltz had ceased; the tired dancers had left the floor, and a new set was being made up for a polka. But the group at the window had found for the moment something more interesting than dancing.

"I think it is positively indelicate for a young woman to practice medicine," said a tall, slender blonde, whose evening dress was cut as low in the neck as the customs of society would permit.

"My father does not think so since he has known Miss Preston," said Miss Graham. Evidently she, as well as her father, intended to champion the young doctor's cause.

"She cannot be a very refined person, I am sure," said another young girl.

“My father says she is remarkably refined, and cultivated, and attractive. He thinks they have seen better days. I mean Mrs. Preston and her daughter.”

“O, well! I suppose the poor thing has to do something for a living, then. Is it not dreadful?”

Mr. Forrest's black eyes flashed.

“On the contrary, I think it is admirable! I certainly commend the spirit of this Dr. Preston, though I had not heard of her till this evening. I think it is just as important for a young woman to have some definite purpose in living as it is for a young man; and I cannot see why the qualities that we approve most highly in a young man should be so objectionable and out of place in a young woman.”

“Don't you think it makes a woman so un-womanly, so unladylike, to try to take a man's place in the world?” The question was lisped most affectedly by one of the younger girls.

“Miss Graham, does your father think this young doctor is trying to take his place in Eagle's Mere?” asked Mr. Forrest.

“I think he is too much of a man to be jealous, either professionally or otherwise.”

"Then it does not strike him that she is trying to take his place?"

"Not at all. But she will try to make a place for herself in the world, and I hope she will succeed, too."

"So do I," said Mr. Forrest.

"How dreadfully progressive you are, Mr. Forrest! Do you believe in woman's rights, too?"

It was the same young woman who had expressed her profound belief that it made a woman "unladylike" to try to do something for herself.

Mr. Forrest smiled. "It is not half an hour since I was pronounced a 'dreadful' old foggy. Yes, I do believe in a woman's right to make the best and most of herself she possibly can."

The orchestra struck up a lively waltz. The young people found it irresistible, and hurried away to take part in it. Only Mr. Forrest and Miss Graham remained.

"Thank you, for championing Miss Preston's cause, Mr. Forrest."

"It was not her cause specially, it was the cause of woman in general, and, I might almost say, of woman against herself."

Mr. Forrest was a comparative stranger in Eagle's Mere, and quite unlike the average society young man of the place. In truth there was a great scarcity of eligible beaux, and consequently the few who did duty in that capacity were smiled upon and listened to with an admiring deference that the facts of the case scarcely warranted. If their heads were slightly turned, and if they were conceited to an unusual extent, it was the fault of circumstances.

Mr. Forrest was unconventional to a degree. He did not so much aspire to be pleasing and popular as to be truthful and sincere. Miss Graham could appreciate such qualities.

"Have you called upon Miss Preston?" he asked.

"No, I have not."

"Don't you intend to?"

"I really don't know. Perhaps she may not care for society. She is an M. D., you know, and I presume would look down upon us from her lofty height as quite unworthy her notice."

"Perhaps you are mistaken. She is a stranger here, and I presume is lonely and possibly homesick. It is hard enough for a man to be placed in

such a position as she is ; it must be doubly hard for a woman, even if she is an M. D."

"I am convinced of my duty. I will ask Alice Mayse to go with me very soon."

The two girls arranged for a call upon Dr. Preston at the earliest convenient opportunity.

CHAPTER VII.

THE FIRST PATIENT.

THE same evening that Dr. Preston was being discussed pro and con, at the Hop, she had her first professional call.

Mrs. Preston and Patience were sitting in the office, reading. They kept late hours, for Patience could not leave her mother alone with her sad memories at night, when all dark things seem doubly dark and hopeless, and Mrs. Preston never could sleep before midnight.

Suddenly there was a rap at the door, and Patience opened it. A small, half-dressed, trembling and thoroughly frightened boy, with white face and chattering teeth, stood there.

As soon as he could speak, he asked, —

“Which of you’uns is the woman doctor?”

Patience indicated that she was the person sought, and asked, —

“What is the matter?”

“Baby’s dyin’. In a fit. Most dead. Come quick.”

Dr. Preston put on her hat most expeditiously, took her little medicine case, and started at once with the child. She asked him, as they hurried on, —

“How old is the baby?”

“More’n a year, I reckon.”

“How long has it been sick?”

“Hain’t been sick. He just tuck and had a fit all to oncet.”

“Has he any teeth?”

“A few. Pap says more’s comin’, he reckons.”

They were at the house by this time, a small dingy place in a narrow back street. It was poor enough inside, and dirty to the last degree. An unkempt, ragged woman was sitting in an old rocking-chair with the sick child clasped closely in her arms. She looked up vacantly as Patience came in. On a bed, in the corner, was a man — probably the husband and father — sound asleep. The vile odor of whiskey in the room made it evident that it was a drunken stupor. Patience gathered these details at a glance.

She took the child and walked to the light. Its

face, she saw by the dim candle, was pinched and blue. Its eyes were upturned. Its hands and feet cold and purple.

“Get me a wash-tub,” she said to the mother ; but the woman was dazed, and sat motionless.

“Little boy, bring me a wash-tub, quick,” she commanded the child who had been sent for her. She was already stripping off the baby’s filthy clothing.

“Now bring a teakettle of hot water.”

Fortunately, there was hot water on the stove in another corner of the room, and the boy came staggering towards Patience, holding the heavy teakettle with his two hands.

“Pour it into the tub,” she ordered. Then she tested it with the thermometer she drew from her pocket.

“Some cold water, quick ;” and the boy brought it at once.

Getting the proper temperature, she was just lifting the unconscious child into the warm bath, when the mother rushed at her with a shriek :

“Would ye bile me babby—me swate babby ?” and she seized it out of the doctor’s arms.

“Give me that baby,” said Patience, in such

compelling tones that the mother returned it, and sat down in her chair and moaned, —

“O, me swate babby! Me poor babby!”

The bath soon had the desired effect. The rigid figure relaxed. The breathing became easy. Finally the eyelids quivered, closed, then opened, and the spasm had passed off.

It was sadly evident that the infant was a comparative stranger to soap and water. Its thin little form was in great need of a bath, and Patience gave it a thorough one, then and there. It was not strictly professional, but it was thoroughly womanly.

“How often do you wash this baby?” she asked the mother.

“D’ye mane all over?”

“Yes; how often do you give it a good thorough washing?”

“It’s not for a poor woman like me to spend me time dippin’ me babby in water.”

“I can tell you that you will not have your baby long if you don’t keep it cleaner. Now give me a clean towel.”

But such an article was not in the belongings of the Murphy household, and Patience was forced to use her own dainty handkerchief for the purpose.

"Haven't you some clean clothes for this child?" she next asked. It was already cooing and crowing in her lap, and evidently much benefited by the unaccustomed luxury.

"Indade, and I was maning to wash some the day, but I hadn't the time."

"Have you a clean sheet that I can wrap around it? It must not have these vile clothes on it again." Patience did not stop to choose her words.

The woman hesitated. "And it's not for poor people like we'uns to have things spick and span like you'uns;" then added, "indade, I was maning to wash the day." The Irish woman had not lost her own brogue, and she had added to it the localisms of the lowest class. She was a new type of character to Patience.

"Here, Pat" — Patience turned to the small boy who was standing by the baby and chucking it under the chin with his not too-clean fingers. The baby was responding to these brotherly advances with little gurgles of delight, which gratified the boy amazingly — "Pat, run back to my office and ask the woman there to send me — no, I'll write it on a piece of paper!" And she hastily wrote, —

"A case for you as well as me. Please send me an old flannel skirt, and an old sheet. Will be at home soon."

"Now, Pat, don't let the grass grow under your feet, boy." And away he flew.

Dr. Preston recognized the circumstances of the case in hand. Here was a home that needed reforming, but it seemed a very unpromising case.

"What is the matter with your husband, Mrs. Murphy?"

There was womanliness enough in the wife's breast — probably even affection also — to lead her to try to excuse her husband.

"Indade, Miss, it's not often he's this way. He's out of worruk — and it's done discouraged he is — and that sinds him to the drink, Miss."

Patience asked, "How do you live when he has no work?"

Fortunately for Mrs. Murphy, because it saved her from going into embarrassing details, Pat returned just then with a bundle from Mrs. Preston.

And Patience did another unprofessional thing: she wrapped the baby in the flannel skirt. Then she took the old sheet, and, with a few skillful snips of her scissors, which she always carried

with her, she shaped a night-dress for the infant. Producing needle and thread from the same convenient receptacle, she basted up the garment, and soon had the satisfaction of seeing her first patient comfortable in its clean wrappings. The experience was probably novel to the baby, but it seemed thoroughly to enjoy the unprecedented state of affairs.

“Now, Mrs. Murphy, your baby is cutting teeth. It needs no medicine, but you must keep it clean and cool. Bathe it every morning. I will come in again and see how it is getting on,” and already Patience was walking swiftly away in the cool brightness of the June moonlight.

And thus Dr. Preston communed with herself: “Talk of the mysterious dispensations of Providence! To me nothing is more mysterious than the sending of innocent children into such vile homes, foredoomed to a life of suffering and sin and shame. And then? Well, if what the churches teach is true, then perdition! And the churches profess to believe it, but what do they do about it? Stand off at arms-length; pass by on the other side!”

She passed a crowd of young people at this

point in her self-communing. They were chatting and laughing gayly, on their way home from the Hop.

The lip of the young woman curled instinctively. "What have I in common with them? What is life to them but a holiday? What do they know of the great, sad, suffering world around them? Better for them, though; the knowledge would not bring happiness."

As she swiftly walked past the group, one whispered to another, —

"Dr. Preston."

"How dreadful!" responded a young girl.

But the vision of the slight figure hurrying so rapidly haunted Mr. Forrest. He took it home with him, that vision, and he felt a manly impulse to protect and shield one who seemed so unsheltered and unprotected.

Patience Preston, M. D., just at that time, did not feel any need of protection, either human or divine.

Her mother was waiting for her.

"There's no money in it, mother, but my first patient is doing well, I am happy to say. My professional career is begun."

CHAPTER VIII.

MISS GRAHAM.

THE next morning Patience went to see how the Murphy baby was getting along. As she entered the dilapidated old house she was much surprised to find a fashionably dressed young girl, with a very sweet, refined face, sitting in the crazy rocking-chair and holding the baby in her lap.

Mrs. Murphy was not well enough versed in the ways of society to know that introductions were in order, so the young people were left to introduce themselves.

"Dr. Preston, I believe," said the girl in the rocking-chair, with a graceful nod. "I am Miss Graham, and I am glad to meet you."

"Dr. Graham's daughter! Your father often spoke of you when he was visiting my mother. I quite envy you such a father."

"Thank you, Miss Preston; he certainly reciprocates your good will."

"Thanks. Mrs. Murphy, the baby is all right this morning?"

"Yes, bless its little heart! It was the good turn you did it last night, Miss."

"Have you given it the bath yet, as I told you?"

"No, indade; but I was manin' to do it very soon."

"Get the water and let me show you."

The baby was lying contentedly in Miss Graham's lap, smiling up at her very amiably. By her side was a bundle, evidently of partly worn baby clothes. It was plain that she was well acquainted with the ways and wants of the Murphy household.

"Pat told me this morning the baby was sick last night, and that he went for the 'woman doctor,'" said Miss Graham, while Mrs. Murphy was stirring the fire to heat some water.

"Yes; and when I started to put it in a warm bath Mrs. Murphy accused me of wanting to 'bile her babby.' It is easy to see that Mrs. Murphy has hydrophobia badly."

"It's an old complaint in this family," answered Miss Graham, laughing.

"I hope you have not been criticising the cut

and make of the baby's gown," said Miss Preston, glancing at the garment she had so hastily made the night before.

"Only to conclude that it was a recent importation into this house."

"It is quite the modern 'common sense' fashion, as regards the pattern. But I made a virtue of necessity, and cut it the easiest and quickest way. At least it is, or was, clean."

The baby was still on Miss Graham's lap. Dr. Preston knelt down by her side and unfastened its clothing, and made it ready for the bath.

"There, Mrs. Murphy, you want the water about milk warm — like this. Put your hand in and see how warm I have it. You must not get it too hot nor too cold. Now put the baby in the tub. Let it sit in the water a minute or two before you begin to wash it, and then it will not be frightened."

Already the poor neglected creature was kicking and splashing in the water with great glee. Both girls looked on delightedly.

"There, Mrs. Murphy, see how he enjoys it! Now rub his head well, then his body and limbs. Don't let him stay in too long."

Mrs. Murphy tried to follow directions, but in

such an aimless fashion — making a dab, first at its face and nearly blinding its eyes with the soapy water, and then almost strangling it as she allowed the water to run down its throat — that it was sadly evident she had never undertaken such a task before. Dr. Preston took the case into her own skilled hands and showed the mother how it should be done.

“Now a clean towel.” But before Mrs. Murphy could lament that there was none in the house Miss Graham produced one from her bundle.

“Oh! thank you. I ought to have remembered the condition of affairs here; it was explained to me last night.”

“It is a chronic case of nothing clean on the premises,” said Miss Graham while Mrs. Murphy was putting away the wash-tub. “It has been so ever since I knew the family.”

Dr. Preston had the baby on her lap now, and the two girls were laughing and chattering while they dressed it, in the most unconstrained and unconventional way, getting better acquainted than in weeks of formal intercourse. They talked baby talk to the infant, and it answered in charming baby way; and when they had powdered it

and dressed it in the clean clothes Miss Graham had bestowed, and brushed its little fuzz of hair — which threatened to be red — they agreed that it was a “lovely” child, and went into girlish ecstasies over the “dear little thing,” for all the world as if Dr. Preston was not an M. D. at all, but only a nice, lovable young woman.

Giving Mrs. Murphy many directions in regard to her care of the child, Miss Preston left the house with Miss Graham.

“What is the trouble with the Murphys, Miss Graham?”

“Whiskey,” was the prompt reply.

“I suppose you have many more such families in town?”

“Plenty of them, I am sorry to say.”

“Can nothing be done for them?”

“The case seems hopeless, Miss Preston.”

“Yet the churches claim they have a mission to just such people.”

Miss Graham did not notice the sarcasm in Dr. Preston’s voice, and she responded, “Yes, we have tried to help them; but our success has been very small. Perhaps we have not gone to work in the right way or the right spirit.”

"We," pondered Miss Preston, quite amazed. She had not thought of Miss Graham as being identified with any church, but that young lady had identified herself with Christian workers in the most matter-of-fact manner. "Well, she is a good specimen to meet, I must acknowledge," was Miss Preston's mental comment.

"At any rate, it seems very hard for poor innocent children to be sent into such families, and to grow up with such surroundings," said Miss Preston.

"That is so, I admit. By the way, I am sure I passed you last night here in front of this house. You must have been going home from the Murphys."

"Were you in that crowd?"

"Yes."

Dr. Preston had to reconstruct her ideas of some people right then and there. This Miss Graham was not so utterly different from herself as she had fancied all those laughing young people must be. Here was a girl whom it was good to know. She enjoyed social pleasures; not extravagantly, but wholesomely: she was kind and considerate to the poor; she had given thought

and care to serious social problems, and she had not hesitated to avow herself a professor of religion.

They had reached the office. "Come in, please," said Dr. Preston heartily. "I want my mother to meet you."

"I must do myself the justice to say that I was intending to call very soon. I should have done so before, but, I confess, I was a little afraid."

"Of what, Miss Graham?"

"Of you, or rather, of Dr. Preston. I was foolish enough to suppose a professional woman was quite unlike other people; and my fancy had painted Dr. Preston very unlike the reality."

"I am glad you don't find me at all formidable."

"No; I find you very much like other sensible girls, only a little more so; and, I confess, the difference is decidedly in your favor," said Miss Graham, with a merry laugh that showed off her dimples to great advantage.

For Miss Graham had a sunny face, on which the dimples came and went as she smiled, and the smiles chased each other rapidly over her fair features. Miss Preston was won to her from the first moment she saw her with the Murphy baby in her arms.

"I think people generally, especially young people, consider me as a natural curiosity, something in the style of Barnum's bearded woman, or the 'what is it;' I mean in the small towns. Of course in the large cities it is an old story to see women who are medical practitioners. But it was hard for them, at first, to make their way against prejudice and ignorance, and especially the professional jealousy of masculine M. D.'s. I am greatly indebted to your father for his manly treatment of me, which was, I am free to confess, quite unlooked for."

They were in the office now.

Patience opened the door of the little dining room.

"Mother, can you come in?"

Mrs. Preston entered directly.

"Miss Graham, mother."

"The doctor's daughter, I am sure. She resembles him very much. I am very glad to meet you," and she shook her proffered hand most cordially.

"Father often spoke of you both while you were so ill at the hotel. I intended making a formal call, but this informal one is much more

delightful. I have been telling your daughter she is not at all like the idea I had formed of her."

"Which may or may not be complimentary."

"Quite complimentary, I assure you. I was rather afraid of 'Patience Preston, M. D.,' till I met her; but I find her very much like other girls only, I am sure, more sensible, and practical, and useful."

"I have sometimes feared that my dear child's profession would cut her off from society of her own age. Anything unusual in one's opinions or pursuits seems to isolate one more or less."

"We shall not let Dr. Preston isolate herself. The young people are anxious to meet her —"

"As they would be to see any other curiosity; like the fat woman, for instance, or the Ohio giant," interposed Patience.

"I must admit some curiosity on our part, but I assure you it is kindly and well-disposed."

"I suppose I ought to be grateful for such a concession," Patience added. "I expect to meet prejudice, but I hope to overcome it, in time."

Miss Graham, while talking, had noticed several glass jars filled with not very clean looking water, standing on the window ledge, in the sunshine.

“Pardon me, Miss Preston, but I acknowledge a great degree of curiosity in regard to those jars of water. I presume they are there for some very mysterious purpose. Dare I ask what that purpose is?”

Patience smiled as she replied, “Only one of my favorite amusements, microscopy.”

“I don’t quite understand.”

“Those jars contain water from different sources here in Eagle’s Mere. This clearest looking water is from the lake; this jar is spring water; this next one holds ditch water; and this last has in it water from our hydrant, such water as we are drinking every day.”

“But what are you going to do with it, Miss Preston?”

“Examine it under my powerful microscope, after it has stood here a few days,” said Patience.

“I have read of the wonders a drop of water contains,” said Miss Graham, “but never saw them under a microscope.”

“Oh! then I must show you a drop, or a very tiny part of a drop, and see what you think.”

Miss Preston arranged her microscope, and placed a drop of ditch water in a good light for inspection.

She looked at it a moment and then said, "Allow me to introduce you to a world of wonders, Miss Graham."

Miss Graham uttered an astonished, "Oh ! oh !" as she saw the strange, fantastic, and very much alive dwellers in the circumscribed sea. "What horrible creatures they are ! There is one that is a perfect tiger in his ferocity ; the others are afraid of him. Why, he is just eating them up alive."

"That is a water tiger, answered Patience. "It is very common in stagnant water."

"I hope there are none in our hydrant water, as the idea is not very pleasant. Fancy our gulping dozens of those ferocious creatures at once ! It would never do to let Mr. Murphy and his saloon friends have a glimpse of the horrors a drop of water holds. They would want no better reason for drinking whiskey the rest of their lives."

"I have not examined the hydrant water yet, but hope it is not quite so animated. If you are interested enough, I would like you to come here in a few days and look at it with me."

"Oh ! thank you. What a delightful resource you have in such a pursuit," answered Miss Graham,

“And I want to bring a friend to call with me, if I may.”

“I should be very happy to meet any of the young girls you choose to bring,” said Patience cordially.

“That invitation is restricted to them, is it?”

“I think no one else would care to come,” answered Patience. “To tell you the truth, I am not at all a society woman. I have no reserve fund of small talk to draw upon. I cannot grow enthusiastic over fashion, or the opera, or the last theatrical craze. I am a very prosy, practical, unromantic person, with my own way to make in the world. I am ambitious to make a name for myself, not to marry one. I would rather earn a fortune than get one by marrying it. You see I am not like the rest of you.” Patience laughed pleasantly.

“No; I see you are not. The ‘rest of us’ are careless, good-natured, fond of pleasure, and altogether very commonplace and good-for-nothing.”

“I might take your own estimate of yourself, if I had not met you at Mrs. Murphy’s. That is quite out of keeping with your description.”

“Oh!” laughed Miss Graham, “we all make a

little pretence at doing such things, I suppose, to ease our consciences. But I must go this minute. Dr. Preston, you are altogether too fascinating ! I have made a long visit this morning, and I remember a serious promise to mother that I would be at home very soon. See what you have done ! I shall tell her it is your fault," and, with a hurried "good-morning," she hastened away,

CHAPTER IX.

DR. PRESTON'S METHODS.

AS an advertising medium, especially within her own immediate circle of friends, Mrs. Murphy was better than the Daily Star or Weekly Luminary. Nothing pleased her more than to take her baby under one arm, and to gossip from door to door. The sudden illness and speedy recovery of the infant was a prolific theme for neighborly conversation.

"And indade whin it was tuck I didn't know what to do. Its eyes was clane rolled up out of sight, and its swate toes and fingers was blue and cold. I cuddent sind for Dr. Graham, by raison of its bein' so late at night, and me awin' him a big bill at the same time. Thin I minded the woman doctor, and I sint Pat for her."

"What did she give him?"

"Nothing at all, at all. She jist stripped off his clothes and put him in a tub of hot water."

"And was that all?"

"Wasn't it enough, the darlint? And he was smilin' and crowin' in her arms before I knowed it, almost. And didn't she sind home and git some dacent clothes and fix it up as clane and swate as an angel, bless her heart!"

This last item in Dr. Preston's method of treating the case touched a tender spot in the heart of every mother. They remembered it.

It was a bad summer for the poor babies in Eagle's Mere. The weather was unusually hot and dry, and much sickness prevailed. Miss Preston was assured in her own mind that the water supplied the town was very impure, and that much of the illness was due to that cause. Her services were constantly called for by the poor, and, though she was well aware that she would never receive a penny, she was just as attentive to the child of poor Pat and Bridget Maloney as if its parents had been millionnaires.

At first the disease among the children was of a mild type, and yielded readily to simple remedies. Dr. Preston carried on, single-handed, a crusade against uncleanness and intemperance. She insisted on much bathing of the little ones,

and that their clothing should be frequently and thoroughly washed. She tried also to teach the mothers how to cook for their families in such a way that their food should be healthful, palatable and economical. This all was in strict accordance with her ideas of professional obligation.

As the weeks passed the disease became of a more alarming type. It did not yield so readily to the remedies that at first were efficient. Dr. Preston began to be anxious. She could not sleep at night, when she was at home ; but after a time she was often with the little sufferers all night.

Mrs. Preston now came to her help. So much depended upon good nursing, constant watchfulness and carefulness. The mothers were inexperienced, and could not be trusted. If a child's morbid appetite craved anything many a mother gave the desired article of food regardless of consequences. The medicine was often put aside after one trial, because the child did not like it, or the mother could see no good effect from it.

It was a great help to Patience, having her mother take the oversight of the severe cases. She went from house to house, and the mothers looked upon her as one having authority, from her

relationship to the doctor, to see that the doctor's orders were obeyed.

All this was among the very poorest class of Eagle's Mere population. There was not much prospect that Dr. Preston's purse would be filled by her self-denying labors, but she had the true zeal of the profession, and was untiring in her efforts.

Meanwhile the disease had become almost epidemic, and the children of the better class began to suffer. The old physicians were called in, and were kept very busy. They were not as successful as Patience had been, from the fact that they had not time to act as nurses, nor ability to secure competent nursing. The mortality among the little ones grew alarming.

A meeting of the Medical Society was held. It was the regular meeting, but the time was spent in discussing the epidemic.

"Our new doctor seems to have been very lucky with her patients," said Dr. Graham.

"I reckon she is a right good nurse for the babies," said Dr. Moorhead, with a sneer. He was not one of the progressives.

"Well, if nursing saves the patients, what more do you want?" retorted Dr. Graham.

"I want the people who nurse called nurses, not doctors," was the reply.

"Do you know anything personally or professionally of this young woman, Dr. Moorhead?"

"No, and I don't want to. She is entirely out of her sphere when she advertises herself as a doctor. She unsexes herself in doing it. She may have a smattering of medical knowledge, — I can't say as to that, — but I have no patience with her pretences. I must say, the idea of women setting up to practice medicine is all wrong."

"Well, I confess to being as much prejudiced as yourself till I met Miss Preston, or rather Dr. Preston. But I was forced to admit that she was at least as well read as myself. Of course she lacks age and experience, but she has the theory all right. I would trust her diagnosis of a case as much as I would my own, and I should have great confidence in her ability to prescribe the best remedies. Her mother was very ill indeed, but she conducted the case with the skill of a veteran."

"We all know that you are very susceptible to the charms of the sex," sneered Dr. Moorhead again.

"I am not speaking of her personally, but pro-

fessionally. Her ability is not to be sneered out of the discussion. Just see how she has managed all those cases down in Shanty Town. You know yourself how difficult it is to do anything for or with those people. They get frightened and send for a doctor about as they do for the priest. They seem to think if we only look at the children, that there is some charm in it, and it makes no difference whether they follow our directions or not. In fact, I believe they study to out-wit and circumvent us, by hiding the medicine, or professing to give it when they do not. I venture the assertion to-day, that if you or I had treated as many of these sick children in Shanty Town as Dr. Preston has done, we would have lost several cases, but she has not lost one."

"She has an eloquent defender in you. How would you like to be called in consultation with her, some day?"

"I should certainly go, just as I would if called in with any other physician."

"And I certainly should not! The very idea is too ridiculous."

"Please tell me why, Dr. Moorhead, as we are discussing the subject pretty thoroughly."

"Because it is not proper for woman to try to fill the place of man."

"Assertion is not argument."

"The case does not call for argument. The sphere of woman is well-defined, and does not need re-adjusting."

"Never mind, Dr. Moorhead ; you'll hear good reports of Dr. Preston, all your prejudices to the contrary, notwithstanding."

This discussion fairly represents the attitude at that time of the men in the medical profession in the smaller towns towards women who sought to enter the same profession. In the larger cities the battle had been fought and won. In Eagle's Mere Dr. Preston had to encounter the full force of the prevailing prejudice.

Shortly after this interview Dr. Preston was called to see a child who had different symptoms from the other children, yet there was no doubt the disease was the same. But the case was alarming, and, for the first time, Patience felt the need of help. She naturally thought of Dr. Graham.

"Mrs. Sullivan, your Tommy is a very sick child, and I want to send for some doctor to consult with. Shall I send for Dr. Graham?"

"Oh! me Tommy, me Tommy! Is he dyin'?"

"Now be quiet, Mrs. Sullivan. Tommy is not dying, and we don't want him to die; that is why I want to send for Dr. Graham. You know two heads are better than one."

"And would ye as soon sind for Dr. Moorhead? He doctored me old man once."

Of course Patience had no objection. Dr. Moorhead was sent for, and came. He had not understood that Dr. Preston was in charge of the case. Probably Mr. Sullivan considered it politic not to mention her at all.

As he came in he saw a self-possessed, intelligent, refined-looking young woman standing by the rude bed. She was bathing the child's fevered face, and fanning him at the same time. Dr. Preston's appearance was not in the least like the picture his fancy had painted, so he smiled blandly at the young woman, after a polite bow, and courteously asked, —

"Who is the attending physician?"

"I am." Spoken in the most natural way.

Here was a predicament! Dr. Moorhead had positively said he would not consult with any "woman doctor," and particularly not with this

one. Should he take up his hat and leave? He glanced at Patience from under his shaggy eyebrows. She did not seem at all unsexed. Her manner was very gentle and womanly. She was dressed in a quiet but decidedly becoming style. When he had reached this point in his cogitations she looked him directly in the face with her frank gray eyes. There was something winning — even compelling — in the look. Dr. Moorhead was conquered.

He asked a history of the case, which she gave in a plain, intelligent way. She told him of the symptoms that alarmed her, and gave her own opinion of the child's condition, but added modestly, —

“I felt that the gravity of the case required counsel, and I am glad to have the benefit of your experience in treating it.”

They consulted together until Dr. Moorhead entirely forgot his prejudices — forgot even that Dr. Preston was a woman — and he talked with her as freely as he would have done with Dr. Graham.

Dr. Preston proposed the use of a certain remedy. “It is an experiment I did not quite like to take the responsibility of trying without

advice, but it seems to me the best thing to be done."

Dr. Moorhead acquiesced, and they gave the medicine, then sat by the bed and watched the effect. Patience still fanned the child, and her eyes never wandered from his face. The silence of the night was unbroken except by poor Tommy's labored breathing. Gradually this grew more quiet. Patience put down her ear and listened. Her finger was on his thin wrist. Soon she said, very quietly, to the mother who was crouching on the floor in the corner, with her apron over her head, —

"Mrs. Sullivan, Tommy is better. But keep quiet."

Dr. Moorhead nodded approvingly: "Yes, the crisis is past. That was a happy suggestion of yours." He had the grace to give Patience the credit of suggesting the remedy. "Now he will get along, I think, and I will go home. Shall I accompany you to your home?"

"No, thank you. I shall stay here."

"Stay here! Miss Preston — Dr. Preston — do you often do this sort of thing?"

"What sort of thing?"

"Stay in these places all night?"

"I do."

"And you are not afraid?"

"Afraid of what, Dr. Moorhead?"

"Of these rough people in Shanty Town."

Patience laughed softly. "They are all my friends. Of course I am not afraid of them."

"But it seems such an unsafe place for a young woman, at night."

"Dr. Moorhead, I am outside of that class when I come here. I do not come as a young woman, but as a doctor; and I am not afraid."

She was winning her way. Dr. Moorhead was as staunch a friend as Dr. Graham himself. Perhaps this was to be her compensation for her unselfish devotion to those low-down creatures in Shanty Town. If she had not won money, she had won a firm friend in the profession.

CHAPTER X.

“THE YOUNGEST MEMBER OF THE BAR.”

MR. DEARBORN prided himself upon being the youngest member of the Eagle's Mere bar. It was in no spirit of modest self-depreciation that he referred to himself on all possible occasions—and all occasions were possible—as the boy lawyer. It was, rather, as if he would say, “See what I am in the very infancy, so to speak, of my mental powers! Now comprehend, if you can, what my mind will be when it attains its full maturity!”

But this plea of extreme youth did not bring him within the list of persons to whom Dr. Preston had offered her professional services. If Mr. Dearborn, the natty boy lawyer, wished to make her acquaintance he must find some other plea than that of illness.

He certainly was curious to meet her. He was always curious to meet any one who was in any way

out of the common. He boasted of having personally known nearly all the remarkable men — and women — of the country. For so youthful a man the list of his distinguished friends was very long. He had from his earliest years — by his own account — been on intimate terms with statesmen, presidents, and possible presidents, senators, judges, literary people, legal celebrities, play-actors and poets. He more than intimated that they had sought his advice in matters of moment; advice that he had graciously bestowed, and for which he was held in undying regard by the recipients.

At that particular time no president or supreme judge was honoring himself by a stay in Eagle's Mere, so Mr. Dearborn had time that he could devote to Dr. Preston. He desired to know her as a woman, and as a remarkable and unusual type of woman.

Mr. Dearborn quite prided himself, also, upon the grace with which he could unbend from the stern pursuit of the law and make himself fascinating to womankind. This was another of the pleasant traits of his remarkable character. In fact, Mr. Dearborn's list of conquests in this direction was as long as his list of distinguished friends.

He must have begun his havoc among female hearts in his cradle.

Dr. Preston sat in her office, one evening. She was reading up on the treatment of the epidemic that was raging among the children of Eagle's Mere. She had been out all day, and had come home not only tired, but very anxious in regard to one of her patients.

The door-bell was rung; not timidly, as the poor people who so often called for her were in the habit of ringing it, but in a loud, self-asserting way. Mrs. Preston opened the door.

A youthful-looking, small figure, with a very tall hat, which he gracefully removed, stood before her.

“Is Dr. Preston in?”

“She is. Will you come in?”

Hat in hand, he entered the office.

“Miss Preston — Dr. Preston — I believe?”

“Yes,” very coolly.

“My name is Dearborn. I have been promising myself the pleasure of calling upon you for some time,” seating himself with great complacency. It did not occur to him that his visit could be inopportune or unwelcome.

“I suppose you are quite busy, Dr. Preston?”

"I am." She almost added, "Too busy to waste my time on you." But she refrained.

"I hear there is a great deal of illness among the children, especially of the poorer classes."

"Yes," very curtly.

"Have you tried the new remedy that is so much used now in such diseases? My friend, Dr. Hamilton of New York, told me he was almost performing miracles with the medicine."

"May I ask what is the name of this wonderful new remedy?" There was a little incredulity in her tone.

"Eucalyptus. It is from an Australian tree."

"But that is an old remedy, Mr. Dearborn."

Nothing daunted, he replied: "Yes; in some forms. But this is quite a new combination of Eucalyptus with other remedies. Dr. Agnew tells me it is almost infallible."

Miss Preston began to comprehend the young man. He was evidently ambitious to be considered a walking encyclopædia, and she determined to draw him out.

"Indeed! I am so glad to hear of it. Can you tell me something more in regard to it?"

One of Mr. Dearborn's amiable peculiarities was

that he often mistook his active imagination, or the products of it, for accurate facts. He never hesitated to draw upon it in any emergency, and he did so with most unblushing self-assurance. So now he was at no loss.

"Let me see: Dr. Mitchell, Weir Mitchell of Philadelphia — you must know of him, Miss Preston? — Dr. Mitchell was telling me about it, not long ago, and he said it was a combination with some of the bromides. But I really was not paying close attention to what he said "

Considering that he had sufficiently impressed Miss Preston in the line of medicine, he branched off in another direction.

"How do you like our little town, Miss Preston? "

"I find it very pleasant."

"People who travel consider the scenery unequalled. For myself, I have never seen anything, even in Switzerland, that excels the scenery in our immediate vicinity, either in grandeur or beauty."

Mr. Dearborn could truthfully say that, as he had never trusted his precious self to the mercy of the briny ocean. Patience suspected as much, but her face wore an aspect of implicit confidence and unbounded interest in the youth's statements,

"The lake is very beautiful," she suggested.

"Yes ; a very diamond on the mountain's brow, Miss Preston. People rave about Lake Como ; I assure you, Eagle's Mere is worth journeying twice as far to see."

"Indeed ! How happy to have so much beauty and grandeur at our front door," she replied. "Fortune certainly favored me when she directed my steps to this remarkable place." There was not a suspicion of sarcasm or insincerity in her tones. She seemed to have accepted Mr. Dearborn's unqualified praise of the locality as well deserved.

Mr. Dearborn was immensely flattered by her air of attention and interest.

"You must really allow me to show you some of the choice bits of landscape around here. Will you kindly permit me to accompany you on a drive some pleasant evening very soon ?"

This was going a little too far on first acquaintance, and Patience replied, —

"You must remember my time is not my own. I am liable to be called for at any hour, and I do not dare absent myself from my office for any length of time. I am quite devoted to my profes-

sion, Mr. Dearborn, both as a matter of interest and duty.”

“Of interest and principle, one might say.”

“Yes; if one was anxious to make a very poor pun, Mr. Dearborn.”

“It is a poor pun, I confess. It is not original.”

“I thought not,” answered Patience, with an air that implied, “anything that originates with Mr. Dearborn could not fail to be good.” He was susceptible to that kind of flattery.

“I see you are very literary, Miss Preston,” pointing to the pile of books on the table before her. “May I ask what you are reading?”

“Oh! certainly. This is an old volume of ‘*Materia Medica*’; this is ‘*Diseases of Children*’; this brilliantly illuminated book is a fine edition of ‘*Comparative Anatomy*’; this is the ‘*United States Dispensatory*.’ You see my reading at present is in the line of my profession.”

“Which is quite right and proper. I suppose you take the various medical journals?”

“Several.”

“To my mind, the best conducted of them all, Miss Preston, is the ‘*Surgical and Medical Reporter*.’ I get quite absorbed in its pages some-

times. There was a very interesting case of heart disease reported in it not long ago. It was extremely curious."

"Did you feel any symptoms of heart disease yourself after reading it, Mr. Dearborn? That is the usual effect upon the non-professional reader."

"Indeed! I am quite heart-whole, as yet," with a glance that was intended to be very telling.

"How dreadful!" laughed Patience. "Another instance of the hard-heartedness of your sex." Patience added mentally, "And soft-heartedness."

Such a tribute to his manhood pleased him precisely. "I am bound to confess I have seen so much female loveliness that I am growing very critical. But, if you can believe it, I was once unusually susceptible."

"You must have been quite young then?"

"Yes; and I am still young."

"So young, and yet so steeled against all our charms!" responded Patience.

"Do not say 'our' charms, Miss Preston! Please do not include yourself in the number of those against whose loveliness I am proof."

He rose as if to leave. "I have had a most

delightful call. Will you kindly permit me to call again?"

"You might not find me at home."

If Patience fancied this would discourage him, she was mistaken.

"Then I should try again, with your permission. Good-evening, Miss Preston!"

"Good-evening!" and then he bowed himself out.

"An insufferably conceited shallow-pate," was her mental comment.

"Mother," calling her in from the dining-room, "you have missed an intellectual feast. Such a noble specimen of manhood as Mr. Dearborn is! No wonder I am impatient to attach myself for life to some masculine party that I can claim as my own personal property!"

"Patience, my child, the love of a true manly heart is next in value to the love of God. I pray you may rightly know and appreciate both, some day."

"And Mr. Dearborn fancies himself a man!"

CHAPTER XI.

A SERIOUS TALK.

MISS GRAHAM did not forget her promise to call often upon Dr. Preston. Soon after Mr. Dearborn's evening visit Miss Graham called and brought with her Alice Mayse. Patience was at home, and was most cordial in her greeting.

"I would like to have come sooner, Miss Preston, but I knew your duties kept you so occupied that I was afraid I should intrude."

"Well, I am at leisure this afternoon, and I want you to take off your hats and make a long call. I am just famishing for young company, for I have been so absorbed with my sick people that I have grown old, and anxious, and wrinkled, and gray."

"It would take your powerful microscope to discover the wrinkles and the gray hair, but I can readily credit the anxiety," replied Miss Graham.

The girls seated themselves in the easy chairs,

and were soon laughing and chatting merrily. Miss Graham produced a tiny bit of crochet, and Miss Alice was knitting lace. It was quite an event in the Eagle's Mere life of Patience, for she had met very few of the young people.

Suddenly Alice exclaimed, "I am just going to confess, Dr. Preston — it seems so funny to call a girl 'Doctor' — but I was going to tell you that I fancied your office would be quite a different-looking place. This is just as dainty as a parlor."

"What did you expect to see?"

Patience asked the question with an amused smile.

"I think I expected to see skeletons, for instance."

"Oh! we don't keep ours in the office, do we, mother? We keep them put away, most decorously, in our closet."

"I am glad you do. It would make me shiver and feel creepy all over to see one in the room. But we girls must seem very foolish and silly to you, Dr. Preston."

"Why?"

"Because we lead such aimless, useless lives. Now you are doing something every day."

“Are not you?”

“Yes, in a fashion; but what does it all amount to?” Alice was still the speaker.

Miss Graham spoke: “While we are girls in our fathers’ houses we can hardly be said to be living our own independent individual lives. We are parts of the family whole, and all that can be expected of us is to fill up the chinks.”

“A very important work, Miss Graham.”

“I know it. I am not complaining of it. But we have so little to show for all our work.”

“And we do not accomplish anything. I feel as if I had no mission in life,” said Alice.

“How do you occupy your time?” asked Patience, with some curiosity.

“We read a little, we sew a little, we look after the housekeeping a little; we dust the parlor and we rearrange the silver on the sideboard, and change the bric-à-brac on the mantels.” Alice did not get any farther.

Miss Graham went on: “We spend an hour or two at the piano, and make calls, and are called upon.”

Patience was becoming interested. “And what do you talk about?”

"We gossip good-naturedly. We tell each other confidentially who is engaged, and who is particularly attentive to whom, and when we think they will decide the important question. Then we talk of the mysteries of cooking, and give each other our latest recipes."

"You are getting into my province now. That is part of my professional duty," said Patience.

"And when everything else becomes stale, flat and unprofitable — when conversation lags and the weather is exhausted — then we fall to and discuss servants. We all are wide awake when we begin upon that theme! We narrate our experiences, and sympathize with each other, and anathematize the whole class of servants — as if they had neither sensibilities nor souls, poor things!"

"Yes," said Alice, "that is about all we do or say. Now don't you think we are leading very useless lives? Could you be contented to live so?"

Patience answered gravely: "Your circumstances are so different from mine that we cannot make comparisons. I have chosen my course and I must follow it out to the end. I confess I sometimes envy girls in sheltered homes, who have no care or responsibility, but who can go through

life cared for and protected, and shut away from contact with the disagreeables of existence. But I do not often indulge myself in such feelings."

Miss Graham replied: "If you have your trials, you also have your reward. You can feel you are doing so much to relieve suffering and misery; and that thought must help you. And I often think that a physician sees people when they are in affliction and their hearts are tender and open to good impressions, and it is so easy then for one who has such access to them as you have to show them their need of a Heavenly Friend." Miss Graham spoke very quietly and reverently.

"Miss Graham, I am not at all fitted to point one to a Friend I have not found myself," said Patience.

Miss Graham looked astonished. "Are you not a church member, Miss Preston?"

There was a very perceptible curl of Miss Preston's lip as she answered:

"No, I am not. I could not profess what I do not believe, nor promise what I cannot perform. Are you church members?"

"Yes; both of us. Most of our young people are," was Miss Graham's answer.

"And you did not mention your religious duties at all," said Patience.

"But we try to perform them, though very poorly, perhaps."

Miss Preston rose and walked up and down the room two or three times. Then she said, in a voice full of emotion, "I tell you, girls, if I could believe what you profess to believe, and feel what you profess to feel, and entertain the same hopes you profess to cherish, I would give up willingly all my own plans and purposes, and be contented to work anywhere or do anything. I cannot understand how church members can speak of life as being empty and useless, if they truly believe what they profess. It is because I have been brought into intimate relationship with so many professors of religion who had no heart in their profession that I am so skeptical in regard to any reality in the thing professed. I am sure I could not go into any cause in such a half-hearted way. I have to put my whole soul into whatever I undertake. And if I undertook the salvation of my soul by the method of church membership, I should surely feel that I had my hands and heart fully occupied."

"But church membership does not save us, Miss Preston," said Miss Graham.

"No; but the thing signified by your membership does save you, if there is anything in religion. Your union with the church means that you have taken Christ as your Saviour, and you dedicate yourselves to his service. Am I right?"

"Yes, Miss Preston; and do believe that we are not all hypocrites, though we may be very inconsistent and indifferent. But I assure you we are trying, in our poor, imperfect way, to serve the Master. Perhaps we follow him afar off—I know we do—but we try to follow him. I am so sorry that my life is such a poor exponent of my faith; sorry that I have done so little to influence any one in favor of the truth; I can only ask forgiveness for the past and strength to do better in the future. But you certainly have met some persons that even your judgment would pronounce true Christians. There is your own mother, Miss Preston."

"My mother is an angel," was the quick answer. "Except for her I should have no hope in this life, and neither faith nor hope in another."

"If religion can do so much for her, it surely

can do a great deal for you, if you would try it, Miss Preston."

"Why has it not done more for other people, then? Why has it not kept some of its devotees from sin and shame, crime and disgrace? Why has it permitted them to dishonor their name, and to break the hearts of those who trusted in them and loved them?"

"They may have been self-deceived, Miss Preston. There was a Judas among the twelve. Even Peter, who loved his Master to the death, denied with an oath that he knew him. Is the Church any worse now? Did not Christ himself say that the tares must grow with the wheat? I know there are many tares, but there is much good wheat, too." This was Miss Graham.

"Miss Preston, please don't judge all church members by me. I am a frivolous girl, I confess. But indeed I do have my hours of serious thought, when I feel ashamed of myself and dissatisfied with my aimless life. But, candidly, I would not give up my belief in the truths of religion, little as it seems to affect my living, for anything in this world." Alice Mayse spoke with unusual seriousness,

“Well, girls,” said Patience, “you have taught me one lesson. I confess I have thought you were very sweet, somewhat thoughtless, average girls, with no serious aspirations beyond the day’s or the week’s, or the summer’s enjoyment. I yield the palm to you. You tell me you are trying to live for another world. For myself I must acknowledge I have thus far in life bounded all my aspirations by this world’s horizon. I frankly tell you I wish I had your feelings on the subject; existence would open out broadly and grandly before me. At present it is dwarfed and narrow, for the shortness of life appalls me. But I cannot see things as you do.”

There was earnestness in her tone.

“You will come to the light yet,” said Miss Graham.

The crochet hook had not taken a stitch for a long time; the work lay in Miss Graham’s hands. Patience took it up. “What is it, Miss Graham?”

“A sack, for Baby Murphy.”

“Christianity exemplified,” said Patience.

Just then the door-bell rang.

“Is Dr. Preston in?” asked a boy.

“Yes.” Patience was at the door herself.

"Pet is worse; can't you come right away?"

He asked the question eagerly.

"Directly," she replied, and he flew away.

The girls already had their hats on to go.

"I am so glad you came. We shall understand each other better now, I hope. Do come often."

Patience was putting on her own hat as she talked.

"I will walk with you to the next corner."

CHAPTER XII.

HOW PET NORTON WENT HOME.

IT was to one of the most stately and refined homes in Eagle's Mere that Patience was now hastening. Hitherto most of her practice had been among the very poor; but a few of the best families in the town, hearing of her successful treatment of the cases of epidemic that had come under her care, had been induced to employ her themselves when the disease entered their homes. Dr. Graham's often expressed confidence in Dr. Preston had something to do in moulding public opinion in her favor, and Dr. Moorhead had frequently told of his midnight meeting with Patience; he had the manliness to acknowledge that she had shown great skill in treating that particular case.

Dr. Preston went at once to the sick room. The day was hot in the extreme, but inside the shaded apartment it was cool and comfortable. A cot was drawn to the center of the room, and beside

it knelt Mrs. Norton, Pet's young mother. Mr. Norton sat in a chair by the window.

Dr. Preston's quick eye saw at a glance that a great change had come over the child since she left her, early in the morning. Already death had set his seal upon her beautiful face. She was only seven years old; a fair-haired, blue-eyed, lovely little creature: the idol of her parents, and the sunlight of their home.

"How can they endure it?" was the first thought that came into the mind of Patience.

Mrs. Norton was very calm. She knelt beside the cot, holding one of her darling's hands in her own, and trying vainly to bring a little warmth to the fast-chilling fingers.

Patience knelt beside her and put her own finger on the slender wrist. As she did so she glanced into Mrs. Norton's quiet, still face, in order to learn if she comprehended the situation.

"Yes; Pet is going away for a little while. Jesus wants her to come where he is. By and by he will send for papa and mamma, and we will go, too."

The large blue eyes were looking straight into the mother's face.

“Will Jesus come for me, mamma?”

“Yes, darling. He is coming very soon.”

“I know I’ll not be afraid of Him, mamma, because he loves the little children.”

Patience was mixing some wine and water. She raised Pet in her arms that she might drink it. The child swallowed it with difficulty. After Patience placed her back upon the cot, Pet still held her hand.

“Miss Preston, do you love Jesus?”

Patience knew not what to say. In the presence of death, and especially the death of a child, all excuses and subterfuges seemed of no avail. And, after all, the question was one that must sometime be answered.

Pet waited a moment and then went on: “I hope you do, because I want you to come and see me when you get to Heaven.” To her, the idea of Heaven seemed very familiar.

Mrs. Norton’s lips quivered, but her face was still serene. Mr. Norton now came and knelt on the other side of the cot. Pet gave a hand to each of her parents. Patience stood at the foot of the couch.

“Papa, pray that Jesus will not forget to come

himself for me. I know I will not mind leaving you so much if Jesus comes for me."

In trembling tones the father asked that the dear Saviour who took the children in his arms would come and take this precious little one, also, in his own strong, tender, loving arms, and carry her safely to her home in Heaven.

"Now sing, mamma!"

"What shall I sing, my dearest child?"

"Sing 'I am going home to die no more.'"

Patience wondered much whence came the strength that enabled that loving mother, in sweet, clear tones, to sing the hymn to the close.

Pet seemed satisfied when the last note was sung.

"I am so sleepy, mamma! It is almost night. I will say, 'Now I lay me down to sleep,' and then I will go to sleep."

The prayer, that has been lisped by millions of childish voices at the knees of Christian mothers, and that has trembled from the lips of old age in those last hours when age is putting on eternal youth, was repeated, in faltering tones, to the very end.

"Good-night, mamma! good-night, papa!" She

tried to raise herself from the cot to give each a good-night kiss.

They kissed her, held her a moment in a clasp it was agony to loosen, and then laid her gently down. Once again she unclosed her blue eyes.

“Good-night, Miss Preston !”

The afternoon grew into evening. Still the fond watchers knelt by the cot, and Patience knelt with them. They noted every changeful expression on the beautiful face that was fading before them. There were no tears shed. There would be time for tears by and by. Occasionally Dr. Preston moistened the lips of the child with a few drops of water, but that was all that love or human skill could do to alleviate the last moments.

The moon, at its full, came up and poured a flood of light into the room. The shadows of the vines at the window flickered over the cot and the floor, but a darker shadow was stealing over the sweet face. Not a word was spoken, in that solemn hour, by any of the watchers—at least, not audibly. Never had Patience witnessed death in such circumstances. She seemed to stand on the very verge of eternal verities, and the things she had doubted and almost despised, came to her

soul in that quiet room, and in presence of that pure departing spirit, as, after all, the only solid and enduring realities. She was obliged to confess to herself that the religion that could strengthen a little child in the face of death, and enable it calmly to go out on its last journey, held in itself something she did not possess.

And even more did the calmness of the devoted mother and father appeal to her soul. It was not the cold stillness of despair. They were not stunned into silence. There was, in both, an evident leaning upon One stronger than themselves—a trust in an Arm that was not flesh.

Patience could criticise church members for their inconsistencies. She could call them hypocrites and deceivers; but here was something she could not criticise. There was no hypocrisy in this shaded room, where the angel of death held tryst with the departing spirit. Patience almost envied the child who was leaving a world that held in itself such dark possibilities, and in her inmost heart she would gladly have exchanged the unbelief and the disquiet and the unrest of her own soul for the calm trust of these parents in this hour of their agony.

Suddenly the blue eyes, whose light they had not hoped to see again, opened wide and glowed with unearthly brilliancy. The child seemed looking far off, into infinite distance, and to be gazing upon scenes beyond mortal ken.

“He is coming for me; his arms are held out for me; yes, I am ready!” And she sprang up as if to meet the waiting arms.

And they who watched doubted not that she was safely borne across the river and into the Heavenly City. But for them remained only a white, cold form, wearing on the marble face a smile of ineffable sweetness—the smile that greeted the coming of Him in whom, with child-like faith, she had trusted.

For a few moments they were thrilled into silence. Then Mr. Norton took his wife into his arms, and carried her from the room, after each had imprinted a lingering, loving kiss on the still lips.

Into that sorrow, so sacred, so submissively borne, Patience could not intrude. As she left the house and went out into the moonlight, she felt that she had met an argument in favor of the religion of Christ that she could neither doubt nor gainsay.

CHAPTER XIII.

MR. FORREST.

THE next evening Miss Graham and Mr. Forrest called on Miss Preston. Miss Graham had asked permission to bring "my friend, Mr. Forrest," and Miss Preston had readily granted it, and had not given the matter a single thought afterward until they rung the office door-bell, and she admitted them herself.

Mr. Forrest impressed her favorably at first sight, and she could readily understand the tone of evident pride with which Miss Graham appropriated him to herself in the little possessive pronoun with which she had spoken of him.

"They suit each other admirably ; I am glad of it : Miss Graham is a fortunate girl."

Such were the thoughts that passed, almost unconsciously to herself, through the mind of Patience as she admitted her visitors and was introduced to Mr. Forrest.

"It is a beautiful evening, Miss Preston," said Mr. Forrest.

"Is it? I believe I have not noticed what the state of the weather is."

"Miss Preston has so much wider a range of topics on which she can talk, that she does not concern herself about the weather," said Miss Graham. "I don't know what the most of us would do if that subject was forbidden."

"On the contrary, I am very much interested in the subject. For one reason, I must go out in all sorts of weather. For another, it affects my patients very seriously. But I am free to confess that I cannot talk indefinitely on the topic and make myself interesting. It has its limitations."

She looked rather tired and dispirited, Miss Graham fancied. She was dressed in a plain black silk, and wore a cluster of rich red roses in her belt—but the flowers failed to give color to her pale face. Her manner, however, was earnest and cordial. Mr. Forrest formed a fair estimate of her character in less than five minutes.

"An honest, earnest, whole-souled woman, but not an entirely happy woman." This was his verdict.

“I sympathize with you, Miss Preston. I have not the slightest fund of small talk to draw upon in social emergencies. I never get any farther, I mean in that direction, than the one thrilling remark I made when I came in. I trust the brilliancy and originality of the observation struck you favorably. However, please step to the front door, you and Miss Graham, and take a look at the lake.”

He opened the door, and the girls went out and stood on the porch. For a moment neither spoke. Words were inadequate to the occasion. The full moon shone down into the clear waters of the lake, and was reflected in a long, shimmering golden pathway—it looked like a bridge of light on which angels might pass to and fro, if angels ever deigned to visit the earth. All around the lake the sentinel trees kept watch and ward, and saw their own shadows reflected in the water, on whose banks their lives had been spent—and into which they gazed, by sunlight and moonlight and starlight, as if they loved to see their images there—as they had done for ages past, and would do for ages to come.

Standing there, in that quiet evening, how far-off and insignificant and unreal seemed the cares

and worries, the pursuits and perplexities of everyday life!

Something of this was in the thoughts of each of the three, but none of them spoke. It was a time for silence—and silence was more eloquent than words, for each divined the others' thought more accurately than any of them could have voiced it.

And then they saw a tiny light approaching the house, which proved to be a cigar, and the smoker thereof was Mr. Dearborn. They did not stay any longer on the porch. The prospect from it had lost its charm—as least it could not be viewed to so much profit in Mr. Dearborn's society.

Mr. Dearborn, after his usual graceful and impressive greetings, turned to Miss Graham.

"May I take a seat near you, Miss Graham?"

"I think so; yes, I consent."

"I want to ask you how the church fair is coming on. I understand you are deeply interested."

"No, I am not deeply interested. I do not approve of church fairs, as a rule—but our people have undertaken this to help along an object that I do approve of, and so I shall assist as much as I am able."

“So you don’t approve of church fairs! I supposed all young women were in favor of them. But I know our most distinguished clergymen disapprove of them. Henry Ward Beecher told me once he would not allow his people to hold one.”

“Is that so? His weak and struggling church must have been quite at a loss to know how to raise funds if he persisted in his determination,” said Mr. Forrest. The sarcasm was entirely lost upon Mr. Dearborn.

“By the way, Miss Preston” — suddenly wheeling his chair so as to face her — “by the way, I do not remember to have seen you at church.” Of course this was Mr. Dearborn.

“I presume not,” was the reply.

“We men are quite given to absenting ourselves from church, but women are generally such conscientious church goers that their failure to attend church strikes one as remarkable.”

No answer. Conversation lagged.

Mr. Dearborn made another effort. “Religion is beautiful in women and children. It seems to suit their pure natures, and gives added charm to their loveliness.”

"What do you mean by religion?" asked Mr. Forrest.

"Why, what is usually meant. Going to church, visiting the sick, giving to the poor."

"Is that your definition of religion?" queried Patience. "How comprehensive, how ennobling!"

Mr. Dearborn looked at her. "I am sure you must admit there is something in it."

"Yes, and no," answered Patience. "There is something that is called by that name which I do not believe in. It is a thing of sentiment and sham. It is a dilettante affair, that takes pleasure in dim churches, and cloisters, and chants—in clerical millinery, and genuflections; in creeds and confessions. It is a hollow pretence, having no heart in it."

"You have only given us the negative side," said Mr. Forrest.

Her face grew tender with emotion. "Last night I saw a little child go away from this life into another and untried existence. She was a timid, gentle child, who would scarcely have left her parents' side of choice, but she went out into the great unknown without a tremor of fear; yes, even with a glad smile, because, she said, the arms

of the Jesus who loved little children were held out to take her. There was something real and tangible to her in her religion. I believe in that kind, or would, if I could find it."

"I know we are all inconsistent, Miss Preston, but at heart we may have more of religious feeling and principle than people give us credit for, who judge us by our daily way of living," said Miss Graham.

"I am not speaking of the so-called inconsistencies of church members," responded Patience. "I have used that plea too often, and I am ashamed of myself for it. We are all inconsistent with ourselves, and what if we are? You, Mr. Dearborn, I presume, argue a case to-day, and by your forceful arguments carry the jury right along with you."

Mr. Dearborn bowed low, in pleased assent.

"And next week you will take exactly the opposite side and argue with even more force, because you have received new light on the subject. Or else have the promise of a larger fee!"

Again Mr. Dearborn bowed delightedly.

"And who shall say you are inconsistent, or, saying it, shall blame you? I certainly do not

pretend, in my practice, to say and do and believe the same things, precisely, one week that I do the next. So I am not longer going to join in the hue and cry against inconsistency in church members. But what I do complain of — or rather, what surprises me beyond measure — is their half-heartedness. If there is anything in religion there is everything; but the little influence it has on the lives of most church members, and the little heart they put into their religious duties, convinces me that the thing they profess to have faith in, is a myth." Patience spoke with great feeling.

"Miss Preston, are you reasoning fairly?" asked Mr. Forrest.

She turned to him and said, bitterly, "Have you never seen homes wrecked, hearts broken, and lives blasted by those who were active church members?"

"Yes. The tares and the wheat must grow together," he replied. "The winnowing will come by and by. To us the tares and the wheat look very much alike, but there is an Eye that sees and detects the difference."

"You are taking it for granted that there is really wheat — good, solid, whole-hearted grain,

sweet through and through—in the field. From my standpoint it seems to be all tares.”

“That is a severe charge to bring against us,” said Miss Graham.

“I am only speaking of the religious life that is in you; pardon me, I mean in all these church members. Socially, many of them are perfectly charming, so are many who are out of the church. It is not their religion, but their natural temperament makes them so delightful, so true, and honest, and warm-hearted. But just look at, for instance, many of the mothers who are church members. I don’t mean to be severe, but I leave it to you if I am not truthful. They take far more interest in the dancing-school than the Sabbath-school. Do you ever see them going to the Sabbath-school with their children? Yet they profess to believe that Jesus loves little children, and that he died to save them! But they never go with them where this great truth is taught, though they go to places of amusement week after week, most perseveringly.”

“Miss Preston, you are very sarcastic,” interrupted Mr. Dearborn.

“Indeed, I do not intend to be. And I tell you the honest truth. If I could see men and women

who make these religious professions living fairly, and squarely, and joyfully, and with their whole hearts up to their professions, I should then be convinced there was some truth in them. I only wish I could see such people."

Mr. Forrest spoke gravely. "I see my mother, every day, living a beautiful, quiet, unostentatious Christian life; and if she were the only one in the wide world who did, I should still believe there is not only some truth, but all truth in the religion of Christ. You, too, have a Christian mother, Miss Preston."

"My mother is an angel," said Patience, with visible emotion. "When I look at her I almost am convinced of the reality of religion — if there were only more like her!"

And not one of the little company dreamed that in her lonely chamber, with heart almost broken, and eyes from which tears rained, that mother was kneeling and pleading with the Master for the life, the spiritual life, of her doubting, restless, unhappy child!

"But you spoke of a child who died in this faith," said Mr. Forrest.

"Yes;" and again her eyes grew misty with

emotion. "Yes, I saw more in that home to make me feel there may possibly be something in religion than I ever saw before. I confess it frankly. To Mr. and Mrs. Norton, and to dear little Pet, there was a reality in their belief. They seemed to lean on a Strong Arm. Strength more than human was given them in their hour of greatest need. But why, if such strength can be obtained in such emergencies, do not church members get it for their daily needs? Such straits come seldom. But life is full of places where we need help, and guidance, and direction; and if what you profess is true, there should be no trouble in getting them. But, so far as I can see, you church members worry and perplex yourselves as much about these things as the rest of us do; and you don't seem, as a rule, to be any more serene and patient than the outside world."

"I am afraid there is too much truth in what you say, Miss Preston," replied Mr. Forrest.

"Well, let me say just one thing more, and then we will change the subject. If I could feel in my heart what you all profess to feel—that Jesus died for me, and that my sins have been forgiven for his sake—I know I could not do enough to show

my love for him. I should count no life worth living except as lived for him. I cannot comprehend such amazing indifference to One who has loved you as you claim that he has loved you. I would be ashamed of such coldness towards such a Friend."

"Miss Preston, permit me to suggest that you have mistaken your calling. You ought to have entered the ministry; you preach admirably," said Mr. Dearborn, who began to weary of the discussion.

"But you know it is 'easier to preach than practise'," responded Miss Preston.

The talk was quite commonplace afterwards, and Mr. Dearborn was in his element again. After a time, the three visitors took their leave together.

"A very unusual style of woman," said Mr. Dearborn, removing his cigar from his mouth in order to say it. "I don't think I would like to live with her."

"Indeed! Had you an idea of making some proposition to her, looking toward a life-partnership? If so, it is fortunate that you changed your mind in time," laughed Miss Graham.

"Yes," responded Mr. Forrest, very seriously. "I thought the conversation would tire Mr. Dearborn."

"Well, it did." He drew a long breath, as of excessive weariness. "But Daniel Webster expressed precisely such doubts and misgivings."

"To you?" asked Miss Graham, who knew Mr. Dearborn's peculiarities.

"Yes; many years ago, in Washington."

"How long has the sage of Marshfield been dead?" asked Mr. Forrest. A great silence fell upon the three, and then Mr. Dearborn bid Miss Graham and Mr. Forrest good-night.

"We must try to help your friend," said Mr. Forrest.

"I am sure that something in her past life has made Miss Preston morbid and unreasonable on the subject of religion. She never speaks of her history, but her mother's face is a sad, though peaceful one. She has learned to trust; her daughter has not."

"And she tries to excuse her unbelief by our 'half-heartedness.' It is an expressive word, and I confess I felt her strong condemnation of us in that regard as too true."

“So did I.”

In the little chamber the mother still knelt. The moon shone full upon a white face, a bowed head, and hair fast silvering in life's autumn. Her prayers were all for others' needs. Their needs were her greatest wants.

And in the office Patience walked with quick, restless step, back and forth, back and forth, and questioned the goodness and the wisdom of God, who had permitted her life to be shadowed by a cloud that seemed to her like the blackness of darkness.

CHAPTER XIV.

A CLEW.

TO say that Mr. Forrest found Dr. Preston an interesting young woman would poorly express his sentiments after that first visit. There was something very earnest and intense in her nature, that appealed to the same qualities in him. He did not agree with her. In many ways he entirely disagreed. But he gave her credit for being strictly sincere. Besides all this, she was so different from the conventional Eagle's Mere type of young womanhood. Whether the difference was in her favor or otherwise, it did not signify, but it was refreshing to meet a new variety, and especially so original a variety.

It was not strange that Mr. Forrest soon found his way again to the pleasant little parlor office. Patience admitted him, laying down, in order to open the door, a tangle of soft white fleecy wool. When he was seated she took it up again, and

Mr. Forrest divined that she was trying to wind it, unaided, a task that is somewhat difficult.

"Shall I hold the wool for you to wind, Miss Preston?"

"Thank you. It is, I confess, somewhat awkward to manage alone. It has such a habit of getting into tangles. But I am accustomed to worse tangles, and I usually try to straighten them myself," she said, with a smile.

"But you will let me help you in this?" And he took the wool and put it over his hands in readiness for her to wind.

"I am not going to wind it, Mr. Forrest. I am going to mat it, like this;" and she proceeded to pile the wool, as it was unwound from his hands, in a soft mass.

"Why do you proceed in that way? I am sure you will have no end of a tangle directly."

"No; not if I mat it carefully. It is to prevent the wool from stretching, as it would if I wound it. There will be no trouble so long as I keep the right end of the wool in my hand. That is the clew that will disentangle all the apparent intricateness of loops and rings."

"What a grand illustration of the way to un-

tangle other intricacies! If you have the proper clew, it is easy to straighten out many things that seem hopelessly crooked."

Miss Preston looked up. "You are thinking of our talk the other evening, Mr. Forrest?"

"Yes; if you had only been winding wool, Miss Preston, your arguments would have lost half their force."

"How so?"

"You would have seen that everything depended upon having the right clew; and you might have concluded you had not found it."

Miss Preston's face flushed. "I am quite ready to accept your illustration, but I despair of finding the end that will untangle all the mysteries and inconsistencies — no, I abhor that word — all the doublings, and twistings, and turnings, of people who claim to be living straightforward lives."

"Is it necessary to make the attempt?"

"Again I do not understand you."

"You are not called upon to untangle Miss Graham's snarls for her, if she is winding wool, for instance."

"Do you mean it is not my affair how other people live and act, Mr. Forrest?"

"You are putting a strong construction upon my words, but they might be susceptible of that interpretation," Mr. Forrest replied.

"Then what am I to do, Mr. Forrest?"

"Do about what?"

"How am I to judge if there is anything in religion? I put the question squarely."

"Try it for yourself, Miss Preston."

She did not answer. The wool was all wound, and she was busily counting stitches for a few moments, as she commenced a mysterious bit of feminine adornment. Mr. Forrest watched her with interest. He liked to see her employed in this way. It seemed more suitable that those white, shapely hands should be busy with knitting needles than with a surgeon's saw or lancet, or — horrible! — dissecting-knife! Was there anything in her profession, he wondered, that made her skeptical in regard to those truths that most women accepted without question?

"Mr. Forrest, how do men live in this place?"

"Principally on good, substantial food," he replied, adding, "Is that what you wish to know?"

"Yes; that answer will do as well as any, if you mean mental food. And if you do, the ques-

tion very naturally comes up, where, or in what market, do they get it?"

"I think you mean to ask what resources we have, in this little place, by which we can sustain our mental selves?"

"Yes; you have my meaning. You have no reading-rooms, no public libraries, no picture-galleries, no course of lectures, so far as I know. Your amusements, I suppose, consist in a few good plays at your opera house, and probably many poor ones. Do you ever have really fine music there?"

"Seldom. We cannot afford first-class talent. But, I assure you, Miss Preston, we turn out full houses to a minstrel show."

There was such an expression of contempt on his face, that Miss Preston understood him.

"It seems to me that life here, for young men, is either very narrow or very dangerous."

"Narrow, I admit, but why do you think it must be dangerous?"

"Because you have so little choice. If young men are not contented to settle down like staid old people, I fancy the saloon and the billiard room offer great attractions to them."

"You are right, Miss Preston. We have a number of cultivated, refined, in fact brilliant young men, but I see them steadily deteriorating. Some are going downhill with wonderful celerity, and the final catastrophe cannot be far off."

"Why don't you do something for them?"

"What can I do, Miss Preston?"

"You are a church member, and there are many of you. Have you not, unitedly, strength enough and influence enough to get hold of these young men and save them from such a fate?"

"We ought to have, but I acknowledge that we do not even seem to try."

"Yet you claim to believe that they are going straight down to perdition; to lose not only body, but soul, do you not?"

"Our church teaches it, and most of us believe it when we stop to think about it."

"Then help me find the clew to understand such strange and unaccountable indifference."

"You are using my own illustration against me very forcibly, and I do not blame you for it. I suppose we have grown so accustomed to this state of affairs that we don't stop to consider how dreadful it really is."

“Perhaps, Mr. Forrest, my profession leads me to look for symptoms of disease rather than indications of health, and so I am disposed to be unduly critical in regard to church members. But it truly seems to me there is work for all of you to do in trying to save these young men, and if religion is what it claims to be, I should think you would be driven to desperate efforts in their behalf.”

“And, as you are a physician, suppose you prescribe a remedy for this sad state of affairs, Miss Preston.”

“It hardly comes within my province. I am an M. D., but that does not signify ‘Doctor of Morals,’ ” said Patience, laughing.

The white fleecy fabrication was rapidly taking shape under her fleet fingers. Mr. Forrest saw that she worked towards a definite end, and worked rapidly and surely. There was no hesitation, no holding off at arms-length to scan or admire: her work went swiftly forward. It was a revelation of her character, fancied the interested looker-on. She would never work aimlessly in any department; her work would all tell. He had confidence enough in her to believe she could

suggest something that would help him in this duty she had pointed out to him. And he had just recommended her to try for herself the religion of Christ — he, who was so poor an example of its power! He felt humbled at his own useless life, and it was in a very subdued way that he said again, —

“But you see the condition of affairs so clearly, that I think you may suggest something to be done in this emergency.”

“As a physician, I seldom use what many of the profession call ‘heroic practice.’ I try mild remedies at first, unless the case is altogether desperate. Suppose, for instance, that you should try a free library and reading room. I don’t need to go into details. You probably know more than I do of such matters; I mean in regard to the management of a reading room. Of course you must make it attractive. You must have the principal daily and weekly papers and monthly magazines. You must have popular books in your library, but you can elaborate the plan. I only throw out the hint. It may not even strike you favorably.”

“It does strike me favorably, Miss Preston, and

I thank you with all my heart for putting the idea into my stupid brain. One thing, Miss Preston, I must say. Don't blame my religion for my indifference to the condition of things here ; blame me for not having more religion ! That is the real secret of my carelessness. I am grateful to you for stirring me up, and I hope I may profit by it. God helping me, I shall try to do something for him, right here in Eagle's Mere, and I shall commence in the way you have indicated. Will you help me, Miss Preston ? ”

“ I will do all I can ; you can count upon my sympathy, at least.”

“ Sympathy in the work I am sure of ; and I think you can sympathize in the pleasure of doing it for the Master's sake.”

“ I wish I could, Mr. Forrest ; indeed I do. Life would not be the enigma it is if I could really believe what you profess to believe.”

“ I have been a poor illustration of the power of religion to lift up one's life ; but I assure you it has a power beyond our dull comprehension.”

Miss Preston's face showed that she was deeply moved, but she made no reply. That was one of her peculiarities. If her sensibilities were aroused

she could not control her voice, which would tremble and falter and finally refuse to be heard.

Mr. Forrest rose to leave.

“This has been a pleasant evening to me ; may I soon come again, Miss Preston ?”

She looked him frankly in the face as she said, “Yes ; I shall always be glad to see you.”

He bowed himself out, and in a moment he stood in the light of the clear harvest moon. He walked slowly ; he had been given something to think about, and under this pure white light he saw things more clearly than in the broad garish sunshine. His life seemed illuminated — made better and brighter as by the new purpose he had before him. Yes, it was true, he had not lived as he should have done. He had been content to drift aimlessly. A few words spoken by this clear-eyed, unconventional young woman had revealed him to himself. Yet she was not a church member ; was not half a believer in religion ! The thought startled him ; a prayer involuntarily rose to his lips in her behalf. “God help me so to order my life from this time that I may be a living witness to the power and truth of the religion of Jesus to this soul struggling towards the light !”

CHAPTER XV.

DISAPPOINTED.

MRS. PRESTON'S life in Eagle's Mere was not of her own choosing. It was, too, a lonely life. While her heart was bound up in Patience, and while she would have made any possible sacrifice for her, yet in matters that Mrs. Preston considered vital, they were not in sympathy. None the less did Mrs. Preston love her daughter, and all the more did she pray for her; but often when she would have spoken, she was silent. She did not intrude her own hopes, and fears, and beliefs on Patience. She could only pray and trust that, in God's good time, Patience would come to believe as she did.

Yet she trembled for her daughter's future. Sometimes, when she prayed earnestly "Bring her to thyself, by means of thine own choosing," she grew faint at heart as she thought what the answer to her prayer might involve. She knew well that

Patience was no common character ; she was not to be influenced by ordinary considerations. Years, and trials, and disappointments, and losses, all these, perhaps, she must experience before her strong will would be subdued. And the fond mother's heart, while it would have gladly spared her child every pang, and would have borne all in her place had it been possible, yet had strength to say, " Even so, Father, if it seemeth good in Thy sight."

There was another subject of which they never spoke. Both felt keenly, but differently. It was a sore trial to both of them. Mrs. Preston bore it in the strength that is Heaven-born. Patience bore it stoically, almost defiantly, but never with resignation. Not once did she say, " Thy will be done," in reference to it. She could not change the circumstances ; she was forced to endure the trial, as best she could, because it was inevitable ; but submission to the inevitable is not Christian submission, by any means.

Mrs. Preston was much alone, and often lonely. She went out every day, and her slight figure, and face covered with her crape veil, were soon well known in the place. She alone made frequent calls

at the post-office, which Patience never went near. It seemed as if, in coming to Eagle's Mere, Patience had severed herself entirely from her past. She had no correspondents; a strange state of affairs for a young woman! She never wrote page after page, then crossed and re-crossed the sheets, as is the fashion of girls who have so much to say to each other that no amount of paper written in a straightforward way can hold their confidences.

But Mrs. Preston made almost daily visits to the post-office, and often received letters. Latterly several large, yellow-enveloped, legal-looking documents had come to her. She took these always with a trembling hand. She did not go home at once to read them. There was a cool, shaded nook by the lake-side, and there she went to open these formidable-seeming letters, and to read them, and ponder over them, and decide upon her answer.

One day, in the latter part of August, she found waiting her at the post-office a letter in a large yellow envelope. Her face turned pale as she took it. She had evidently been expecting it, but now that it had come she seemed to fear to open it. She went to her lake-side retreat and sat down

with the unopened letter in her hands. Her lips moved, as if in prayer. She turned the letter over many times; finally, with trembling fingers, she tore the envelope and read the contents. Tears followed each other down her face as she read, but she was unconscious of it. She read it over three times, trying to fix every word in her mind. Then she replaced the sheets in the envelope, and sat for a long time in intense thought. Gradually a peaceful look stole over her white face. Evidently she had reached some conclusion; and there is always peace in a settled purpose.

“Yes; it is right, and I must do it,” she said aloud as she rose from her seat and drew down her veil. She paced slowly up and down by the lake-side for half an hour, deciding the details of her plan. It was with a look of decision that she finally went home.

Patience noted a change in her mother's manner when she entered the office, after an unusually long absence, but she hesitated to ask the cause. The shadow that had come between them, slight as it was, made each careful not to speak of matters that might lead up to unpleasant discussions or, at least, to differences of opinion. In this way an

unfortunate habit of reserve was growing in both of them. Perhaps many people who are considered cold and reserved with their friends, have fallen into the habit from dislike of referring to subjects on which they know their friends do not sympathize with them. And often a diffident or self-distrustful person is counted cold or indifferent. So little, after all, do we know each other, or the workings of each other's secret souls !

Thank God for the day that is drawing near, when these miserable misunderstandings shall be cleared up, and when we shall see as we are seen, and know as we are known !

If either Mrs. Preston or Patience had been negative characters, then neither would have suffered very much from the lack of perfect confidence and concord. But each was a positive and decided person, holding very positive and decided views. Mrs. Preston had learned to bow her will to that of Infinite Wisdom, and to feel that "all things" would eventually "work together for good," both to her and to Patience, and in that confidence she found rest and peace.

But Patience had no such faith ; though, in her inmost heart, she longed to believe in the religion

her mother professed. At least, she told herself that she did. She was groping for the light. She was increasingly anxious to find it; yet, inconsistently, she refused to believe because of the failings and faults of church members! Back of all this unbelief was a root of bitterness that she must remove before she could find peace: she must learn to forgive; that was her true stumbling-block; even a greater obstacle in her way than any professing Christian's shortcomings.

She had, however, a high ideal of Christian duty, and if she ever became a Christian she would be a whole-souled one. In fact, she could not be otherwise and be Patience Preston. Would that time ever come? She seemed far away from Christ now; or, was it only in seeming? Mrs. Preston waited, and hoped, and prayed, but with many tears, that fell unseen and unsuspected.

And mother and daughter, loving each other tenderly, bound to each other by no common ties, yet differing on these points, suffered as only such women can suffer.

Mrs. Preston laid aside her bonnet and veil and then sat down in the office. Patience looked at her wonderingly.

"I must start for New York to-morrow morning, Patience."

"Mother!"

"Yes; I have fully decided to go."

"But you are not strong enough. And it will do no good, mother."

"I feel quite strong enough. Even if I should accomplish nothing I should have the satisfaction of knowing I had done everything in my power."

Patience started up impulsively and went to her mother's side. She knelt down beside her, and put her arms around the slender waist, and laid her fresh young face beside her mother's faded cheeks. Their tears fell together. Patience kissed the thin, pale face, and her mother returned the caress, not once, but many times; as if making up for the days that had passed when Patience had been chary of these tokens of love. It was with a happy heart that Mrs. Preston felt that, after all, they had not grown to love each other less. There might be difference of opinion, but their hearts were firmly welded together.

It was a silent reconciliation; but each forgot the past and felt that never had the other been so near, so dear, so precious, as at that moment.

"Mother, I do not like to think of your taking the long, tiresome trip alone. Remember how ill you were when we came here."

"Yes, I know; but then I was leaving hope behind me. Now I am going towards my hope."

"But what if it should be a false hope, mother? The excitement will keep you up on your way there, but how will it be coming back, if you fail in your mission?"

"Patience, my dear child, I have put all this matter into the Master's hands, and I only want to do my duty, and leave the result with him. If he sees it is best that I shall be disappointed, then I shall try to be reconciled. O, Patience! you have left off your childhood's habit of praying, but do pray for me and the success of my plan now. Surely you have some faith still in a Divine Helper. Do ask him to go with me! I feel the need of some one's prayers, and who, in the wide world, excepting you, can I ask?"

"Mother, I will; only my prayers seem to me like mockery."

Their tears were mingling now like rain. Barriers of reserve and misunderstanding were melting away.

"There, Patience, let us be brave. It will all be wisely ordered, I am sure. And, whatever may happen to me, I want you to know that you have given me the greatest comfort by your promise."

"Then let us consider ways and means. What dress will you travel in?"

"My old black silk."

"You must have a nice lunch to take."

"Do you know, Patience, what time the train leaves in the morning?"

"I will look it up; yes, here it is: 8:35 A. M."

"Quite early, isn't it? but it will not take me long to get ready. I shall carry only my hand-bag. By the way, I think, Patience, you had better get one of the Murphy boys to stay here at night while I am gone. I am sorry to leave you with such poor help as Sally is."

"Do not think of me, mother! Take care of your own self, and don't worry on my account."

The next morning Mrs. Preston started on her trip alone, yet not alone. Many persons, during her journey, noted the quiet woman with the pale, peaceful face. Some gave her the second glance, and wondered vaguely by what paths she had climbed to such sweet serenity of look and mien.

One giddy young girl pointed out the black-clad figure sitting so still, and said to her companion, —

“I do hate to see an old woman travelling all alone! They look so forlorn! It must be dreadful to be old. I wonder if I will ever be as old as she?”

Mrs. Preston was not alone, and the young girl's sympathy was quite as misplaced as ungrammatical. But there seems such an infinite distance between sixteen and sixty!

Two weeks later Mrs. Preston returned. Patience met her at the depot. A glance told the story.

“You did not succeed, mother?”

“No; but I have done my duty.”

They went home together, more united in heart than since they came to Eagle's Mere.

“Did you pray, Patience?”

“I tried to.”

With this question and reply they went into the little cottage.

CHAPTER XVI.

A MIDNIGHT ADVENTURE.

ONE dark September night Mr. Forrest was escorting Miss Graham home from a party. It was after midnight, and the streets were almost deserted. In the distance they spied a tiny light, as of a lantern. It moved leisurely along, and they soon overtook the person who carried it.

"Miss Preston!" exclaimed Mr. Forrest, in surprise.

"Dr. Preston," corrected the individual addressed. "I always go out at night as a doctor, not as a young woman."

"But it is not safe for you to be out alone so late at night. I hope you have not been very far."

"Only to Shanty Town," laughed Patience.

Miss Graham was horrified. "Not alone in that dreadful place?"

"Yes; but I am able to defend myself in case of necessity." And from a convenient pocket she

drew what looked very much like a toy, but really was a revolver.

“You don’t mean you would dare to shoot any one, Miss Preston? I should be more afraid of the revolver than of a burglar, I believe,” and Miss Graham drew away as if in fear that the little harmless-looking six-shooter might take a fancy to go off then and there.

Miss Preston put it again in her pocket. “I have never needed it, and never expect to need it, but it gives me a sense of security to have it ready in case of emergency. As to the Shanty Town people, I am not in the least afraid of them. They all know me, and I have been in many of their homes, and they know I have tried to help them in sickness and trouble. I feel safer with them, rough as they are, than I do on your principal streets, to tell the truth.”

“But, indeed, Dr. Preston, I think I could not sleep at night if I knew you were out on the street” —

“Prowling around with a loaded revolver, Mr. Forrest?” replied Patience. “I sincerely hope I shall not cause you any wakeful hours, though I appreciate your kindly interest. When I took up

my profession I laid aside the fears that are considered so becoming and proper in young women ; not that I am at all brave, for I should run from danger as fast as Miss Graham, and probably faster, but I am not in the habit of thinking anything about it. I go out at night exactly as I would in the day time, if I have a call for my professional services."

"At least I am happy that we have had the pleasure of your company so far on our way," said Mr. Forrest, as they reached Dr. Preston's office, and bid each other good-night.

"Miss Graham, was Miss Preston invited to the party this evening?" asked Mr. Forrest, after a few minutes of silence.

"I think not."

"I should like to know why," he replied, a little sharply.

"Perhaps because she is a stranger," was Miss Graham's answer.

"And she will always be a stranger if you keep on treating her in this 'Priest-and-Levite' fashion."

"Indeed, Mr. Forrest, when I have a company, I am going to invite her. I like her ever so

much, though I confess I am a little bit afraid of her."

"Why?"

"Well, you must allow she is different from the most of us."

"I am happy to agree with you."

"Complimentary, Mr. Forrest, but I am not offended. And you must acknowledge that Miss Preston would seem a little out of place in society."

"What kind of society?"

"Well, at a hop, for instance, Mr. Forrest."

"That is true. I cannot even fancy Miss Preston as the belle of the ball-room. It is an open question with me whether we should aspire to her level, or she should seek ours."

"Now you are sarcastic, Mr. Forrest. I think Miss Preston is living a more useful life than we girls are, though she makes no profession of religion; is not a church-member at all. But we have fallen into certain ways of thinking and acting, and our social views are inherited, and we keep on in the same old ruts, so when a person comes to Eagle's Mere who sets aside our rules and regulations and lives differently, why, we don't quite know whether

to take them in or not. But we are learning to respect and to like Miss Preston, and I think she is doing us good."

"And you can do her good, too, Miss Graham."

"How?"

"By proving to her that religion is a vital truth, and that our lives are influenced by it. Excuse me, but I am heartily ashamed of my own life as having been so little in accord with the spirit of my profession."

"So am I, of mine."

"Here you are at home. I hope you have enjoyed the evening, and will be none the worse for your late hours. Good-night!" And Mr. Forrest walked rapidly away.

It was not much farther for him to go home by way of Dr. Preston's office, and he took that route. There was a light still burning in the room, and the shutters were not closed. He could see Miss Preston sitting with a large book open on the table before her.

"She is studying up some case she is interested in, I presume. Well, she is a plucky little woman, but I don't like to think of her going around alone at all hours of the night, even if she does

carry a revolver. I believe I would rather marry that woman than any one else I ever saw ; but would she give up her profession to marry me, or to marry any one ? Besides, how would I like to hear myself spoken of as ‘ Dr. Preston’s husband ? ’ or, if she took my name, it would be Dr. Forrest and her husband. I think I should not like the position of silent partner in a matrimonial firm. I should much prefer to be the recognized head of the concern. There would be no difficulty on that score if I were to marry any of these Eagle’s Mere girls. They certainly do make lovely wives and mothers. But life with one of them would be a very tame affair compared with a life spent with Miss Preston. She would develop all the good that I am capable of, and I fancy the evil that is in me would shrink from the gaze of her clear cool gray eyes.

“ What nonsense ! She is wedded to her profession, and I have not the slightest reason to think that she cares at all for me.”

And Mr. Forrest went home and went to bed, to dream of Dr. Preston !

Patience was still reading an hour later. She heard a carriage drive rapidly down the street and

stop at her door. A moment after a man came up the steps and rang her bell. She opened the door and recognized the man as one who had called several times before to take her to a little patient in the country.

"Charlie is worse, and I have come for you," he said.

"Very well. I will be ready in one minute," and the man returned to his horse, while she ran upstairs for an extra wrap.

"Mother, I am going up the mountain to Mr. Boyd's. Their little boy is worse. I am afraid he is not going to get well."

"O, Patience! Must you go up that dreadful mountain road this dark night?"

"Mr. Boyd's driver knows the road so well that I feel perfectly safe, mother."

"Well, my child, I suppose it is your duty to go, but I shall be anxious till I see you come home safely. Wrap up well, for it is a damp night."

"Good-by, mother!" Patience stooped down and kissed her mother's pale face.

"Good-by, darling!" and Patience hurried down stairs. She lighted her lantern and took it out with her.

"I am ready, John," and she stepped lightly into the covered buggy. The top was thrown back, very fortunately, as it proved.

John climbed in after her and they started off at a rapid pace. Patience thought nothing of this; in fact, she had so much confidence in John and his knowledge of the road, that she gave herself no concern about the matter so long as they were driving over the streets of the town and the good level turnpike. She was wholly occupied in thinking of the sick boy and the difficulties in his case.

She was suddenly aroused to the fact that John was driving most recklessly, by her hat flying off.

"Stop, John! Why are you driving so fast? Give me the lines, and get out and go back for my hat."

It was difficult to make him comprehend her order. He still urged his horse forward at a mad gallop. They had left the straight turnpike and were in a road that climbed up and down the mountain side, and wound along on the edge of a precipice that at times was sheer down for a hundred feet.

"John, what makes you drive so recklessly? I

told you to give me the lines and get out and find my hat."

A lurch of the buggy threw John so near her that she caught the odor of whiskey. It was clear now what made John drive so carelessly: he was drunk!

Patience revolved the situation rapidly in her mind. She had three miles of wild mountain-road before her, and not a single house all that distance. John was not only drunk, but, from the glare of his eye, as revealed by the light of her lantern which she carefully carried, he was "ugly drunk"; just in a condition to be savage and reckless.

Again she said, slowly and distinctly, "John, give me the lines," and she reached out her hand to take them.

"You just mind yer bus'ness. I'm drivin' this concern;" and he emphasized the words by a cut at the horse that sent the frightened animal on a run.

The next instant the cold muzzle of a revolver was pressed against his temple, and a stern voice said, "Give me the lines!"

He relinquished them instantly, and slunk into the corner of the seat as far from Patience as

possible. She still held the revolver in one hand, while with the other she tried to check the horse in his mad speed. It was fortunate that they were climbing a hill, and the horse soon tired.

They were now in a dense forest, with no clearing except the narrow road, and it was as dark as midnight in all directions save for the little area of light around the buggy which the lantern made. The horse knew the road, probably, but Patience did not, and was forced to leave him to his own guidance.

Suddenly the buggy wheel passed over a large stone, which nearly upset the vehicle. John, leaning back in his corner, was thrown out into the road.

"Good riddance!" said Patience, and she did not even make an effort to stop the horse, and ascertain whether or no the man was killed. She went on to the top of the hill, allowing the horse to choose his path.

The next stretch of road Patience had a distinct recollection was dangerous even by daylight. It was on the edge of the precipice, and was very narrow. It was also downhill. The least step to one side of the road, on the part of the horse,

would send horse, buggy and driver down the rocky slope of the mountain. Patience was in no mood for trying the experiment. She stopped the horse and got out of the buggy. Then she went to the horse's head, led him to the side of the road as far as possible from the declivity, and tied him securely to a tree. This done she drew her shawl over her head, took up her lantern, and started on her long, lonely walk.

It was certainly a relief to leave John and the horse behind her. She really knew she had no cause for fear, but it was a trying situation for a woman, even though she appended an M. D. to her name. The forest was so still — preternaturally still, it seemed to Patience. The little lantern made the trees cast such strange, fantastic shadows, and it opened up such dark avenues among the rocks and trees ! Patience walked rapidly forward, hardly conscious whether she was going uphill or down, but only intent on reaching Mr. Boyd's as quickly as possible. Once or twice she was sure she heard stealthy footsteps behind her ; she stopped, turned, and listened. It was only the rapid beating of her own heart.

She was not timid, she was not afraid ; still it

must be confessed that when a great owl near the roadside, winking and blinking, and much wondering in its wise head what the strange light portended, uttered an inquiring "Whoo-whoo?" Patience felt her heart come up into her throat just as any woman who was not an M. D. would have done. The next instant she laughed at the owl, and at her own foolish fancies.

She could never tell how long it took her to traverse that mountain road, but at last she reached Mr. Boyd's house. She went in, sat down deliberately in a comfortable arm chair, — she was always deliberate in her movements, — and then proceeded further to vindicate her claims of womanhood by fainting dead away.

It clearly was a most unprofessional thing to do; something against all rules, regulations and precedents. The sick-room watchers, who had admitted her, took alarm as Patience lost control of herself, and stood helplessly looking at her as she lay back in the chair, till she rallied, which was very soon. She was almost ashamed of her weakness.

"Give me a glass of water, please."

It was brought. She drank a little, put the

glass down, threw off her wraps, then went to Charlie's bedside.

"How is he?" she asked of his mother.

"Easier than when we sent for you."

Charlie was sleeping quietly, and Patience did not disturb him.

"Let him sleep as long as he will. It is the best thing for him. I will lie down on the lounge, and if he wakes up you can call me."

"Dr. Preston, we did not hear the buggy drive down the hill when you came. How did you get here so quietly?" asked Mrs. Boyd as she went into an adjoining room to show Patience a lounge that she could lie down upon.

"Did you not hear the buggy?"

"No."

Patience said no more. She was resolved not to speak of the matter unless it became necessary. She threw herself upon the lounge and closed her eyes. At once she was wandering in a dark woods, where huge shadows of trees and drunken men danced wildly around in mad orgies, and frightened horses dashed past her, upsetting carriages and throwing the occupants down the steep side of the precipice; then she looked for the luck-

less people, holding her lantern that they might climb up to the road by its friendly light. But when they clambered up they were always John — a long procession of climbing, drunken Johns — and she pointed her revolver at the head of each as he came up into the light, and then men and shadows danced together again.

“This will never do,” she said, as she roused herself. “I will go and watch by Charlie and let his mother sleep.”

She went into the sick room ; Charlie was still sleeping quietly.

“You go and lie down, Mrs. Boyd, and I will sit by Charlie.”

It was growing near daylight. Patience quietly put out the lamp and sat down by the window. Soon she heard the rattle of wheels on the rocky road, and directly over the top of the hill came Mr. Boyd’s horse and buggy, and John ! She felt sorry for him when, an hour or two later, he came into the house, looking apprehensively around.

“Good morning, John !” she said to him, pleasantly. He was perfectly sober now.

“Good morning, ma’am !” he replied, in a down-cast voice.

Charlie was decidedly better in the morning, and, after eating a good breakfast and leaving medicine for the sick boy, Patience started home with John for her driver.

She kept her own counsel, and never referred, even to her mother, to the events of the night or the morning. But John was not so reticent, and he gave a full account of the affair to a crowd at the post-office, bestowing unlimited commendation upon Dr. Preston's method of dealing with a "drunken fool," as he styled himself. From that time he was a sober man, and a staunch friend to Patience Preston, M. D.

CHAPTER XVII.

MR. DEARBORN'S MISADVENTURE.

MR. DEARBORN and Mr. Forrest were at the post-office when John told the story of Dr. Preston's midnight drive with himself. He did not excuse his condition or behavior in the slightest degree, and he gave full credit to Patience for her presence of mind, her determination and her courage. His admiration of her was unbounded, and he announced himself as her champion from that time on.

Mr. Dearborn was much impressed by the narration. He went to his office and sat down in a very easy chair and comfortable attitude, — he never could forget, even in the most important crisis of his life, to make himself as comfortable as circumstances would permit, — then he critically selected a cigar from out his large and varied assortment, and, having lighted it, he proceeded to deliberate:

“Splendid woman, that! Quite out of the com-

mon! What a brave creature she is! Carrying a revolver; pointing it at her drunken driver's head; driving off by herself after she had tipped him out of the buggy—and then taking that long walk alone through the forest!”

We cannot follow his thoughts any farther, nor know exactly by what course of mental reasoning he reached the conclusion, about twelve o'clock, to call upon Dr. Preston. He threw down his cigar, stood before his glass and gave his whole soul, for the space of five minutes, to the proper tie of his cravat. That result achieved to his satisfaction, he drew on a pair of fresh kid gloves, put on his black silk hat, and started for Dr. Preston's office, on glorious terms with himself, and at peace with all mankind.

It must be a very enviable state of mind that renders one perfectly satisfied with one's self and all one's belongings! Even religion does not have quite that effect, for its teachings more than intimate that one never reaches, in this life, a state of such perfection that one can afford to be entirely satisfied with one's self. On second thought, it may be rather a comfortable than an enviable state of mind. However, define the condition as

we may, it was Mr. Dearborn's normal state. It never occurred to him to doubt that the world in general, and his immediate acquaintances in particular, coincided in his estimate of himself and his belongings.

So it was with an unruffled demeanor that he rung Dr. Preston's door-bell. The office girl—Patience had an office girl, now—answered the bell.

“Is Dr. Preston in?”

“She is.”

“Please give her this;” and he handed her his card.

The girl withdrew, and Mr. Dearborn calmly seated himself in a chair and waited. In five minutes or less Miss Preston came in. Her visitor arose, hat in hand, and greeted her with great effusiveness.

“Permit me to congratulate you, Miss Preston, on your remarkable presence of mind and courage in the affair last night.”

Patience was surprised and vexed that John should have circulated the story. She did not want it known. She had no fancy for being congratulated, or considered a heroine. She answered, very coolly: “Dr. Preston is always prepared to go

where her profession calls her. This is a charming day, Mr. Dearborn."

Her manner, and sudden change of subject, almost took away the breath of the youngest member of the Eagle's Mere bar, and quite drove from his mind several very neatly turned compliments that he had intended to pay. If the young man's moral nature had not been so padded and cushioned around by self-esteem, he must have experienced something like a shock; but, being so well protected, he felt no recoil.

"Yes, delightful indeed. I called to ask you if I might have the pleasure of driving you on your round of professional calls this afternoon?"

"Thanks; I have only to go out to Mr. Boyd's. Perhaps I ought to say up, for it seems to me it is uphill all the way."

"The road to Mr. Boyd's is very much like life, Miss Preston. It has many ups and downs," replied Mr. Dearborn.

"You must speak more from observation than experience, Mr. Dearborn."

"Why? I am old enough to have experienced much, Miss Preston," and he laid his gloved hand most suggestively on his breast.

"Nothing serious, I hope," with a tone full of professional interest. "No cardiac affection?"

"O, no! not that."

"I am relieved. But, Mr. Dearborn, your experience surely has only been of the ascents. You know nothing of the falls of life; you have gone up so far I cannot fancy you have had any downhill episodes."

Mr. Dearborn was susceptible to this kind of flattery, as one could divine after five minutes of his society.

"Fortune has been kind to me, I admit, and thus far my career has been exceptionally free from reverses. I have had little to do but climb."

"Quite a modern Excelsior, Mr. Dearborn."

"Thanks! thanks!" He bowed impressively.

"At what hour shall I call this afternoon?"

"At four o'clock. I have some visits to make near here, before I go."

"I shall be here promptly," bowing himself out.

Precisely at four o'clock, he drove up to the door. Dr. Preston was ready, and her escort jumped lightly from the low phaeton and handed her in. Then he seated himself beside her and they started.

It was a perfect day in early autumn. The fierce fire of summer had burned itself away, and in its place was a gentle, genial warmth that had in it neither memory of summer's heat nor prophecy of winter's cold. The trees were in full luxuriance of foliage, but autumn had unfurled its brilliant banners in many spots, and hung its scarlet on the maples and its gold on the beeches that stood sturdily along the mountain slopes among the dark pines and hemlocks.

When they turned from the well-trodden turnpike into the mountain road every step disclosed some new beauty. Here and there an opening in the forest made it possible to look out upon an exquisite bit of scenery. Underneath the trees the mosses and ferns ran riot. Miss Preston's educated eye noted shield ferns, maiden-hair—that loveliest of all ferns!—and even the rare and shy moon fern peeped up between the rocks.

But Mr. Dearborn's soul was not intent on scenery or ferns. Even the bright-eyed squirrels that ran nimbly along under the trees and fiercely scolded the intruders into their private and peculiar domain, did not gain his attention. A sudden and weighty resolution had been taken by the

young man, and such insignificant trifles were not worthy of a thought.

"Miss Preston, this must be about the place where you had your adventure last night?"

"I can't say, indeed. It was too dark last night to allow me to thoroughly identify the spot. I hope you don't ask that question as a lawyer, because I object to being put upon the witness stand. I could not testify, under oath, as to any particular location on this road."

"Oh! I ask the question as a friend. I must be permitted to say, Miss Preston, that the thought of your being exposed to such danger makes me tremble, even yet."

"I am sorry your nerves are so easily unstrung. Have you ever tried bromide?" Her tone was full of sympathy.

"My nerves are not easily affected in ordinary cases. It is the thought of you, of your peril, of how dark this world would seem to me now if you had lost your life last night, that makes me quake." He spoke in a tragic manner, and probably thought for the moment that he fully meant what he said.

"You must have heard an exaggerated account of my adventure. I was not in any great peril.

Do not allow yourself to be troubled further in regard to it."

"Miss Preston, will you not permit me to act as your escort henceforth through these dark and devious ways? May I not be your protector?"

The youngest, and, it must be confessed, smallest, member of the Eagle's Mere bar fully intended to offer his heart and hand in these earnest petitions. But Patience did not choose so to consider it. She answered his questions by asking, —

"You have a very good practice, Mr. Dearborn, I believe?"

"Yes, indeed; my income is ample to support two persons in the style that I should consider due to myself and the wife who should share my fortune with me."

"Then I cannot for one moment allow myself to take advantage of your generous and sympathetic nature, and accept an offer that would take you away so much from a rapidly-increasing and profitable business. I must make an arrangement with some good, steady, responsible man, or half-grown boy, to drive me whenever I am obliged to go out at night."

It was utterly impossible for Mr. Dearborn to

contend against such stupidity on the part of Miss Preston. The idea that his offer of a life-partnership should be understood by her to mean only a proposition on his part to act as her driver, was enough to jar his sensibilities even through the thick padding that surrounded them. After such a reception of his advances it was not easy to continue the subject. Patience understood his dilemma, unconscious as she seemed, and she made his way easy.

"Mr. Dearborn, please give me the history of this region. I know it is historic ground, and I am sure you are qualified, if any one, to tell me the facts of its early days."

Mr. Dearborn's slight bruises were at once soothed by this emollient, so skillfully applied. As he could always depend upon his fancy to furnish facts, when other resources failed, he was able to make a thrilling narrative, though, as veritable history, it would have been as applicable to any other part of the country as to that region around Eagle's Mere. But Patience listened, or seemed to, with an interest that only made larger inroads upon the stores of the young lawyer's imagination. The time spent by Patience in visit-

ing Charlie Boyd was used by Mr. Dearborn in still further inventing history ; and he was able to keep up the recital till he landed Miss Preston safely at her own door.

“Thank you, Mr. Dearborn ! I am indebted to you for a pleasant afternoon. You have made history as fascinating as fiction, and that is more than can be said of all historians.”

“And thank you, Miss Preston, for the pleasure of your company,” and he drove away.

In the silence and solitude of his room that night, Mr. Dearborn reviewed the events of the day. “What if she had accepted me ?” he asked himself. “I certainly was too precipitate in that offer.”

Suddenly a thought pierced through all his panoply of self-esteem that stung him to the quick.

“I believe in my heart that Miss Preston managed me very much as she did John on the same road. She certainly gave me to understand she could attend to her own affairs. I am sure now that she understood me, though she seemed so obtuse.”

It was a strange experience for Mr. Dearborn ; it would have been humiliating to a more sensitive person, or one less comfortably on terms with him-

self. But the young lawyer drew his cushion more closely around him, settled himself in it, and said, "Well, I am glad I am not bound to that woman! None of your masculine women for me. What I want is —" And he fell asleep before he finally decided what he really did want.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A NEW PROJECT.

MR. FORREST was quite as much distressed in mind by John's story as Mr. Dearborn had been, but he did not call to see Miss Preston for several days. Meanwhile that young woman was exceedingly chagrined that the story of her adventure had gotten abroad. She did not wish to pose as a heroine, for one thing. For another, she did not like to be thought of as a strong-minded young woman who carried a revolver and bid defiance to the world. In fact, she did not feel herself to be such a character as a knowledge of the occurrence would inevitably lead people to consider her.

When she took up the profession and practice of medicine she expected to lay aside all foolish timidity and false delicacy. She intended to go where duty called her, regardless of the fact that she was a woman, and so might sometimes be in-

clined to shrink from fancied or real danger. But she was, nevertheless, in every fibre of her organization a true woman. She did not crave either notoriety or adventure.

There were times when it seemed to her that to be shut in a sheltered home, cared for, loved, every want anticipated, every stumbling-block removed from her pathway—this would be bliss beyond measure.

But this was not her usual mood. She was deeply engrossed in her profession. She loved it as a science. The human body, so fearfully and wonderfully made, was like a musical instrument of marvellous mechanism. Originally, every string had been attuned to make exquisite melody, but neglect and ignorance and misuse had wrought their inevitable effect, till the instrument was out of tune, and only produced distracting discord instead of divine harmony. Thoroughly to understand this masterpiece of the Creator seemed to her worth spending a life in arduous study, and she pursued her investigations with an ardor that never flagged.

The practice of medicine was raised quite above the mere struggle for bread and butter. It af-

forded her opportunities to carry out the theories of her teachers. Each case was full of interest, and no two cases ever seemed alike. The idiosyncrasies of each individual affected the disease, and also affected the acting of the remedies.

She dipped into chemistry, and studied the results of chemical combinations as a branch of knowledge very necessary in making out prescriptions. She also employed a powerful microscope, analyzing food and water supplies, believing that the germs of disease were often contained in, and conveyed by, them.

Was there anything unwomanly in all this? Was it any more outside of her proper and decorous sphere to spend her time in this way than to pass her days in sweeping and dusting, in cooking dinners and setting tables, or, if she must work for her daily bread, in making shirts at twelve and a half cents apiece?

This ground had been gone over in the large Eastern cities, and the fact conceded that Dr. Preston, or any other well-qualified woman, was just as much entitled to take up the practice of medicine as a man. The idea had lost all novelty, and women M. D.'s hung out their signs, and they

had ceased to excite comment. But Eagle's Mere was a conservative town, and Dr. Preston was a type of a class hitherto unknown. Hence she had not only her own way to make, but to pioneer a path for her sex; and she felt the responsibility of marking out a way that should be easier for their feet than her own had trodden.

For all of these reasons, and for still other and mere personal ones, she regretted that the story of her adventure with John had been made public, and that she was henceforth, so she fancied, to be considered one of the unsexed, unwomanly, strong-minded, latter-day women.

She was not, at heart, half as composed during her afternoon drive with Mr. Dearborn as her manner indicated. There was really a tempest of suppressed feeling within her, but her habitual self-control made her seem, to the young lawyer, as calm and cool as a spring morning.

Mr. Forrest showed rare appreciation of her character by not calling for several days. When she admitted him to the office — the girl was in the kitchen — nothing in his manner of greeting her indicated that he had heard the incident. Nor did he refer to it during his call.

“Miss Preston, I have secured a hall.”

“For what, Mr. Forrest?”

“Have you already forgotten our plan; I must say ‘our,’ because I intend to have a part in it as well as yourself: to do something for the young men?”

“You have acted very promptly. Now what are your plans?”

“The whole thing grows upon me, Miss Preston, to such an extent that I hardly know where to begin or when to stop. I have a list of three daily and ten weekly papers, and three monthly magazines. These will be sent as soon as the hall is ready for our use.”

“What are you doing to the room?”

“Trying to make it attractive. When I see the gilding and glitter and glare of the saloons, and the jolly good-fellowship in them, I do not wonder so many young men are drawn there. If I could offer any counter-attraction, I should have more hope of success.”

“The reading-room must be made as bright and cheerful as possible, Mr. Forrest. You are not doing this work alone?”

“No; I have all the help I need at present.”

But I want advice, and of course I come to the doctor for it."

"Now, Mr. Forrest, I really do not think I am capable of advising you in this case any further. Had you not better consult a physician of more experience?" smiling in a way that almost rendered Mr. Forrest oblivious of time, place, and mission.

His thought was: "What a rare sweet smile she has! How it lights up her face! Any other woman would be conscious of the power of such a smile, and be in a perpetual giggle." His very proper answer to Miss Preston's question was: "You are the first one to take up the case, and I am confident you can prescribe the right course to take."

"What weighs on your mind just at present, Mr. Forrest?"

"This: Shall we offer any amusements to the young men? Will they not tire of the papers, and go straight from our reading-room to the saloon, and contrast the attractiveness of the two, greatly to our disadvantage?"

"Very likely. For some unexplained reason, the devil makes the way to his domains very enticing."

"You don't think, Miss Preston, that everything that is lovely and winning is of the devil?"

"On the contrary, I am often filled with amazement that people who claim to be God's children do not take lessons of the children of this world, or children of the devil, if you please, and try to throw some gleams of brightness around the upward way."

"As for instance?"

"For instance, you must make your reading-room bright and cheerful. Suggest to your friends to give pictures for the walls. Have a good stove that will make the place warm and bright. Have easy chairs and curtains, and anything in the way of decoration that you can get."

"And what about amusements? That is the ghost that will not down, in my own mind."

"If you could have a gymnasium, in a cheap way, Mr. Forrest, I believe it would prove attractive, and also furnish healthful exercise."

"We will have a gymnasium. Why did I not think of that? How would ninepins do?"

"Admirable idea. And chess, and checkers, and backgammon, Mr. Forrest."

"And cards?" looking keenly at her.

"Do you really want me to express myself frankly?"

"Certainly I do."

"Then my opinion is that I would not have cards."

"Are you opposed to card-playing, Miss Preston?"

"That is neither here nor there in our plans. The young men will not be any the worse for not finding cards in your room. They would not be any better for going there to play cards. If they must have a game now and then, let them play it somewhere else. For my own part, being extremely old-fashioned in my views, I should be glad if men never played cards except at home and with their families."

"Miss Preston, I am another old-fashioned person in my views on that subject, but I stand quite alone, or did, till you just now declared yourself. I have some antiquated and almost obsolete ideas of personal responsibility for one's influence, and especially for one who has professed to be in the world but not of it."

"Do you put your objections on that high ground?"

“As far as I am concerned, yes. I would not judge another man’s actions.”

A faint color stole into Miss Preston’s face. This was a subject upon which she was sensitive. She answered: “Mr. Forrest, I confess I am too much disposed to criticize the short-comings of church members, and to estimate the value of religion by the conduct of its professors.”

“As if one should estimate the inherent power and efficacy of a drug by the ignorance of some quack who professed to practice medicine.”

“Your illustration has the advantage of being one I can understand, Mr. Forrest,” and again her face lighted up with a smile. She looked as if she had caught a glimpse of a truth hitherto unseen. She would think of that illustration later.

“To return to our plans, Miss Preston: I have thought out a course of evening entertainments, or, at least, am thinking out a course. I have put you on the programme for one evening.”

Miss Preston started in dismay. “What can you mean, Mr. Forrest?”

“I want you to give us an evening with your microscope. I know you would make the subject intensely interesting.”

"But I can't think of such a thing."

"Are you going to desert me already?"

"I will do all in my power in a quiet way, but if you want a lecture you must give it."

"Well, then, you must let me come and prepare it under your direction. I have no microscope."

If ever a man made a specious plea, Mr. Forrest did then and there. He was truly anxious for the "evening with the microscope," but he was much more anxious for an indefinite number of quiet evenings with Miss Preston.

And she, unsuspecting, said cordially, "Yes, you can come as often as you wish."

Delightful *carté-blanche*!

"Then I must go, and we will talk over our plans at another time. By the way," — he said this as he stood at the door, hat in hand, — "there is a poor but worthy and safe man who has just gotten a horse and phaeton that he wishes to drive for the benefit of the public, and his own pocket. If you need to engage a conveyance and driver I can recommend him. Leave your orders at the post-office, and he will be on hand promptly."

"I am so glad to hear this. I shall certainly employ him,"

“There!” after Mr. Forrest had taken his departure, “there! He has not heard of my little escapade. I am so glad.”

And Mr. Forrest, walking away with the image of Miss Preston very vividly in his heart, thought to himself, “She will never suspect that she is patronizing the man that I have set up in the livery business on her special account. If I can manage to prevent it, she shall not be taking midnight drives, over dangerous mountain roads, with drunken drivers.”

CHAPTER XIX.

INTO THE LIGHT.

FOR a long time after Mr. Forrest left, Patience stood at the window, that was filled with flowering plants in luxuriant bloom, occasionally picking off a faded leaf, and oftener looking out on the hills in their glorious autumnal dress. Whether it was the mysterious influence of the season, always full of serious suggestions to a reflecting mind, or whether it was something in her recent interview with Mr. Forrest, she could hardly define to herself the reason of her present mood. But as she stood there she was seriously debating with herself the question whether life was worth living. That enigma propounds itself, at times, to every earnest soul, and its true solution must be God-given to each individual. The answer had not yet come to Patience. She was surprised at her own vague unrest as she still lingered by the window. She tried to trace it to its source.

She was absorbed in her profession ; it satisfied her as far as any occupation could. It absorbed her intellect, and she was reasonably successful in it ; she had no cause of anxiety on that score. She would probably grow in knowledge and reputation as the years went on. For the years would go, as years will do whether we would hold them back or urge their onward flight ; and she would visit the sick ; she would rejoice over the convalescent ; she would try to ease the last moments of the dying : this would be the story of her life, and then ?

“ *Cui bono ?* ” she asked herself. “ Is that all I am to hope for, all I am living for, all I was intended to live for ? ”

Deep down in her consciousness she knew she was made for a higher life. She knew, only she would not admit the knowledge even to her own heart, that her only hope of happiness here or hereafter was in finding God and becoming reconciled to him. But she had so long been arguing against Christianity from the indifference of its professors, that her thoughts instinctively took up the same old course of reasoning when she had reached this point in her self communings.

Then, suddenly, the illustration Mr. Forrest had used flashed upon her: "It is as if you should deny the efficacy and power of drugs because some doctors are quacks."

"I know that morphia will quiet the restless nerves, notwithstanding all the charlatans in the profession; why not admit there is a wondrous power in the religion of Christ to satisfy and give peace to our restless souls, even though many church members do not avail themselves of this power?"

She was pulling the leaves recklessly from her plants by this time. The sun was setting behind the western hills, but he was going down right royally, attended by a retinue of clouds in gold, and purple, and crimson. His last beams lingered lovingly on the hills, as if loath to leave them.

"It is a beautiful world, notwithstanding all the sin, and the sorrow, and the unrest. If our hearts were only in harmony with all these glorious aspects of nature!"

Suddenly Patience turned and went swiftly to the kitchen. Sally, the office girl and maid of all work, was there, making preparations for their late supper: Mrs. Preston was also there. Patience

went up to her mother, threw her arms around her slender figure, kissed her cheek, and also untied the strings of her gingham apron, which Mrs. Preston had put on to protect her black dress, and tied it over her own.

“Now, mother, please go into the dining-room and lie down on the lounge till supper is ready. My brains are cobwebby, and I want to clear them out by a little exercise. I will help Sally ;” saying which she gently forced her mother out of the kitchen.

Patience was a skilled cook. She believed that whatever had to be done should be done well ; she also believed that many of the poorer class of the people were literally dying for want of proper knowledge in regard to the preparation of their daily food. The deadly frying-pan was still slaying its victims. Men went from their tables spread with poorly-cooked, unpalatable, unsatisfying food, to fill up the vacancy in their stomachs at the nearest saloon. Hence she considered it a part — and a very important part — of her professional duty to teach the women, in the families where she was called, to cook their food in an appetizing, healthful, yet economical manner,

She was eminently a matter-of-fact person, this Patience Preston, M. D.

It was a very dainty little supper to which she and her mother sat down half an hour later, but there was something about Patience that Mrs. Preston enjoyed more than she did the delicately-prepared viands, the snowy linen, the shining silver and the quaint old china. Mrs. Preston did not understand the mood, but it seemed to her that Patience had settled in her own mind some troublesome question, and that the decision had given her a degree of peace to which she had long been a stranger. But the wise mother asked no questions. She was content to pray, and trust.

Later in the evening, they sat a little while together in the office, which was also library and sitting-room.

“How is Charlie Boyd getting on, Patience?”

“Very well, mother. I shall not go out again unless I am sent for.”

“The Murphys seem to be doing fairly well of late.”

“Yes ; I met Mrs. Murphy on the street to-day, and asked her how they all were. She said they were all ‘middlin’ well savin’ myself, and I’ve been

injoyin' right smart of poor health.' ” Patience had good imitative powers, and she reproduced Mrs. Murphy's reply so ridiculously well that Mrs. Preston laughed heartily.

“I have the flannels made for the Murphy baby, and whenever you want them, they are ready.”

“Have you? Don't you think it would be best to wait till colder weather, and then they may last through the winter? Mrs. Murphy has no forethought, and she will put them on the baby as soon as she gets them. Then when they are worn to tatters the child will go without until some kind providence, like you, will send some more.”

“Patience, I regret more than I can tell you, that you are spending your days here, in this far-away place, and among people that cannot appreciate you — I mean professionally. You have to encounter prejudice as being the first woman in all this region to practice medicine, and it is only natural that your patients should be mostly among the poorer class.”

Patience put out her hands with a deprecating gesture. “Don't talk of it, mother! I am, at least, getting experience. Appreciation does not signify. Whatever regrets I may have felt at one

time, at present, I certainly have none. I am quite satisfied."

Patience did not say this as she would have done three months before. There was not a trace of bitterness or regret in her tone. Mrs. Preston's sensitive ear noted the change, and again she could only pray and trust.

"I think I will go to bed, Patience, for I do not feel quite well. You do not mind my leaving you?"

"No; but what is the matter, mother?"

"Nothing, except that I did not sleep very well last night."

Patience understood. There was nothing in the dispensary that would heal a wounded heart, or insure permanent forgetfulness, except it were potent enough to give the forgetfulness, of the grave. But if Mrs. Preston could not forget, she had, at least, learned submission: she had reached a point far ahead of Patience.

"Good-night, mother!" the tone again had in it a new ring; and then Patience kissed her mother with unusual tenderness.

"Good-night, darling!"

Patience seated herself once more at the table.

She clasped her hands over her head — a favorite position when she was thinking deeply — and her mind went back to the subject of her afternoon thoughts.

“ If one could only know ! Could be absolutely certain ! Is such certainty possible ? ”

Her Bible was laying upon the table beside her. It had not been much read of late. Something — her mother was praying for her child in the room above — prompted her to open the neglected volume. Was it by chance that her eyes fell upon the first chapter of St. John's Gospel ? She commenced at the first verse, and read on slowly. The words were not new. She had learned them years before, when a scholar in the Sabbath-school. But there seemed a new depth of meaning in the familiar words as she read slowly on. “ The light shineth in darkness ; and the darkness comprehended it not.” She stopped there.

“ Yes ; that must be it. The light has been shining all the time, but I have been in darkness, and have not comprehended it.” Then something very like a prayer arose, that she might be enlightened. Did not the ear of Him who waits to hear and answer every sincere petition that trem-

bles from the lips, or is formed in the heart, catch that prayer?

Still her mother knelt, with clasped hands, upturned face, and streaming eyes, in the room above.

After a little Patience read on: "He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not. He came unto His own, and His own received Him not. But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God" — She stopped right there.

" 'He came unto His own, and His own received Him not!' That is just what I have done! I have rejected Him because I have not been satisfied with the conduct of some of His professed followers. But what is that to me? I am not responsible for them, and my personal responsibility is not affected by them. I must answer for myself. Perhaps I have been uncharitable. I cannot read their hearts, but on account of their failure to come up to my ideas of duty, I have not received Him. Yes; I see it now.' 'I am standing just where those unbelieving Jews, in Christ's time, stood.'"

Another pause, and another longing for light

from above, which must have risen as a prayer to Him who heareth in secret and answers openly.

“‘But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God’—children of God! He surely has His children in the world. What a privilege to know one’s self a child of God! I could take up my life joyfully, and count it a privilege to live anywhere, and in any circumstances, could I know surely I am His child.”

A long, long pause, but the suppliant above still knelt in earnest prayer.

“What am I to do? ‘Receive Him,’ St. John says. Why should I not? I have rejected Him, and tried to satisfy myself without Him, but I have signally failed.”

Suddenly she rose from her chair and knelt beside it. “Lord, I would receive thee! I would be thy child!” The scales fell from her spiritual eyes; a hush came over her storm-tossed soul; a great peace took the place of her long and habitual unrest; a light from the world above fell all around her; she comprehended it, for it had illuminated her darkness. In that quiet evening hour He had come unto His own, and, after

those years of slighting His call, and refusing to hear His voice, His own had received Him!

An hour later she went to her mother's room, opening the door very softly.

"Are you awake, mother?"

"Yes, dear."

"Are you feeling any better?"

"I am, indeed. A burden seems to have been lifted from my heart."

"And from mine, too. Good-night!" and she stooped over her mother to kiss her.

Mrs. Preston clasped her arms about the stooping form, and softly whispered, "Thank God!"

CHAPTER XX.

COLLECTING BILLS.

ONE morning, late in October, Patience rang the bell of Dr. Graham's office. The doctor himself answered the ring.

"Good-morning, Miss Doctor!" he said, grasping her hand with old-fashioned cordiality and politeness. "This is an unexpected pleasure. How is Mrs. Preston?" He seated Patience in an easy chair and sat down beside her.

"She is quite well, thank you, Dr. Graham." And then, because she was a very direct, straightforward woman, she went on: "I called to ask you a question or two this morning."

Dr. Graham bowed gallantly. "I shall be happy to answer any questions you may do me the honor to ask."

"They are strictly business queries. I know, of course, that you Eagle's Mere physicians have

a fixed rate of charges. I want to conform mine to it. Please tell me what your charges are?"

"Certainly." And Dr. Graham made out the schedule and gave it to her.

"I suppose some of my patients have been under the impression that I would charge less than you, because I am a woman. If so, they will find they have been very much mistaken. For the sake of the principle involved I shall strictly conform to the rates of your Medical Society."

"And you are perfectly right, Miss Doctor," — this had become Dr. Graham's common method of addressing her, — "and I am glad you have decided so do so."

"One more question, Dr. Graham: How do you collect your bills?"

"By a rigid adherence to, and practical exemplification of, the doctrine of the perseverance of the Saints," said Dr. Graham, laughing.

"But do you collect your own bills?"

"Yes, indeed! Many of the people would consider themselves insulted if I were to put their accounts into the hands of a collector."

"Dr. Graham, I have been acquiring a fund of experience since I came here, but I did not

anticipate I should add the experience of a collector."

"And I must tell you another thing, Miss Doctor: it is not easy to collect a physician's bills. The people, if they get well, seem to think they would have done so without your assistance. And if any of your patients die, the survivors consider it preposterous in you to present a bill for treating a person who died under your care."

"This is a feature of practice, in a small town, that I do not like so well. But most of my patients, thus far, have been so poor that I shall make no charges against them."

"Miss Doctor, if I can assist you in any way, please feel perfectly free to call upon me. My dear young friend," he added, in a sudden burst of genuine sympathy from his warm, paternal heart, "my dear young friend, it would sow my dying pillow thick with thorns if I should know my daughter would be left to struggle alone with the world as you are so bravely doing, and I would like to do for you what I pray her friends may do for her should she ever be similarly situated."

Patience, quite moved by the sudden and totally unexpected evidence of fatherly kindness, felt her

eyes fill with tears. It was so long since any one, except her mother, had shown such interest in her !

Dr. Graham went on : " I am an old-fashioned man, and I must confess that I would like to see every woman sheltered, and protected, and provided for. I know that the rapidly-changing conditions of society have made it necessary for many women to make their own way in the world, and I can fully admire the heroism with which you, and such as you, are doing it. None the less do I feel that you are struggling against fearful odds, and that the burdens you carry are infinitely heavier for your weaker shoulders than those same burdens would be for men to bear.

" Before I had the pleasure of knowing you, I am very free to acknowledge that I was strongly prejudiced against admitting women into our profession. I fancied they must necessarily become unsexed and unwomanly. I was in the habit of declaiming against their incapacity, their inefficient preparation, and their manifest inability either to diagnose or treat a case properly. You have overturned all my preconceived ideas, and I feel it my duty to make this confession to you,

and also to assure you of my profound respect for your abilities, and again to offer my assistance in any way in which I can be of service to you." After which somewhat ponderous but thoroughly hearty tribute of good-will, Dr. Graham again shook Dr. Preston's hand.

"Many thanks, Dr. Graham, for your kind words. I assure you, I appreciate them. And you would advise me to collect my own bills?" she asked, as she rose to go.

"Yes; unless you can make a sort of compromise by sending around a trusty man who is not a regular collector."

"How would it do to get the man who drives for me, to carry them around?"

"That would do very well. I know he is a man you can trust."

Patience walked swiftly home and sat down to make out her bills. In two hours they were ready, and she took them to Jackson. He at once started out to collect them.

In every community there are people who always attend the newest church, go to hear the latest preacher, patronize the last dentist who puts out his sign, and send for the most recently ar-

rived doctor. Of such people Patience could count more than a fair share among her patrons. The novelty in her case was double. She was a new-comer, and she was a "woman doctor;" both of which reasons had been potent enough to send her a goodly number of patients. Dr. Graham's strongly-expressed confidence in her had been the means of her being patronized by some of a more reliable class, and her own success had won her many more friends. But now the test was to be applied that would decide how much dependence was to be placed upon her patrons.

Jackson's first call was at a plain, unpretending house. Of course it was on the south side of the social line of latitude: the most of her patients were on that side. Jackson rang the bell, and a decent-looking woman came to the door. He silently placed the bill in her hand and waited, expectant. The woman glanced over the bill.

"Shameful! Scandalous! That woman has asked as much as any man doctor would have done. I thought, of course, being a woman, she would be glad to come for little or nothing. I am not going to pay any such bill, and you can take it back and tell her so. She didn't do no good,

anyhow. 'Mandy just got well, and she would if that woman doctor hadn't come near her. I never had no faith in women doctors, no how." And she thrust the bill in Jackson's hand and shut the door in his face.

At the next place Jackson was met by a little girl with unclean face and hands, and most untidy dress.

"Is your mother in?"

"Yes."

"Can I see her a minute?"

The child called, without leaving the door:
"Mother! mother! a man wants ter see ye."

"Who is he?"

The question came from remote depths. The speaker was evidently down-cellar.

"I do' know."

Soon appeared the mother upon the scene, and Jackson gave her the bill.

"What did ye say 'tis?"

"Dr. Preston's bill."

"She hain't had the impudence to send no bill, I hope! Let me see how much 'tis? Five dollars! That's as much as Dr. Graham would ask. I never would have sent for her, but I thought,

being a woman, she would come for half-price. I'll pay her two dollars, and not a cent more."

"The bill is five dollars," said Jackson.

"I'll not pay no five dollars, and the next time I have a doctor I'll send for Dr. Graham!" She neglected to add that she already owed Dr. Graham ten times the amount of the modest bill that had just been presented.

The next call was more successful. The bill was for services rendered a child who had been very ill. Patience and her mother had been there day and night, and the grateful woman had not forgotten their kindness. She paid the amount — fifteen dollars — smilingly.

"It has been waiting a long time for Dr. Preston. Henry and I couldn't rest till the money was laid by for her. She earned it twice over. Are you going right up to Dr. Preston's?"

"Not till I've made a few more calls."

"Would it be too much trouble to stop in, on your way back, and get a basket of fresh eggs to carry to her mother?"

"No, indeed. I'll call in an hour or two."

Jackson's success afterward was about the same as it had been thus far. He started out with bills

amounting to two hundred and fifty dollars ; he collected some seventy-five dollars, which was really a good day's work : about fifty dollars more would be paid sometime : the remainder, if collected at all, would be with difficulty. And as a rule, with some few exceptions, those for whom Patience had done the most — in whose homes she had been an angel of mercy, furnishing food and clothing as well as medicine — those were the people who had no words of kindness for the “woman doctor.”

On his way home Jackson stopped for the basket of eggs. A large bouquet of late autumn flowers was also in the basket. “Please give them to Mrs. Preston from me. If ever there were two angels those two women are.”

Jackson delivered the money and the basket, likewise the unpaid bills, but he did not deliver the messages that had been sent by several of the incensed patrons — patrons no more in the long hereafter — of the “woman doctor” who had ventured to send her accounts against them for payment.

Patience gave the money to her mother. “You see I am getting experience in Eagle's Mere, if

not very much else. Fortunately, I am not working for appreciation. Will this help us out of our present straits, mother?"

"Yes, dear; we can get along nicely now. I expect a remittance soon."

The flowers brightened the office for many days thereafter. The humble gifts of the grateful woman were fully appreciated as showing that Patience was not quite wasting her talents, and time, and strength in Eagle's Mere.

"What will you do about the unpaid bills, Patience? Will you just let them go?"

"No, indeed, mother! There is a principle involved that I cannot ignore. I shall put the accounts into the hands of a lawyer; but I will tell him not to distress any one. He shall give them plenty of time to make the payments, but he must insist upon a settlement."

Patience had regretted very much the false position in which Mr. Dearborn had put himself the afternoon of their well-remembered drive. She had no wish to make him feel uncomfortable over the recollection of his unfortunate proposition; she really liked the young man. His exuberant imagination harmed no one; he never said dis-

agreeable things of people. In his way he added very much to the social life of the young people, and was a great favorite, albeit a great romancer.

With a fine instinct as to the most effectual way of making Mr. Dearborn forget the *contretemps*, or rather to make him feel that she had not understood the real import of his offer, she decided to ask him to collect these unpaid bills. She felt that their relations would then be on a purely business basis, and no question of sentiment could come up afterward. Of course the very idea of any sentimental relation between them was absurd; Patience was several years older than himself, for one good and sufficient reason. Ten years later "the youngest member of the bar" would wonder how he could have thought of such a preposterous thing as proposing to a woman ten years older than himself!

Truly he was young, very young!

Mr. Dearborn took the accounts, and he collected them, too. The people who had so positively and indignantly refused to pay felt an increase of respect for Dr. Preston when they found she could not be imposed upon. They liked her all the better for obliging them to pay their just debts.

After all, they did not really mean what they said when they had declared with such fine show of indignation that Dr. Preston should never darken their doors again. When sickness once more invaded their homes they remembered how promptly Patience had always responded to their calls. They could not quite forget the nights of patient watching by their sick beds, nor the delicacies prepared by her own or her mother's hand to tempt the appetite that rejected their plain fare. So it came to pass that, before spring, most of these people were again on Dr. Preston's list of patrons.

CHAPTER XXI.

A STRONGER BOND.

THE reading-room plan was becoming immensely popular. It appealed favorably to nearly every person in Eagle's Mere, regardless of social status or social boundary lines. There were few families that did not feel the need of some such counteracting agency in behalf of some one — father, husband, brother, or son — and who did not gladly take hold of the enterprise as soon as they could lend a helping hand.

One afternoon in October a number of the young people were gathered at the hall, getting things in order. There was much confusion and a great deal of work to be done, but under the efficient leadership of Mr. Forrest, and Miss Graham, who had been in thorough sympathy with the plan from the first, order was being rapidly evolved from the chaos that reigned earlier in the day.

Miss Preston sat quietly in a corner of the large

hall and sewed, rapidly and deftly, the long breadths of carpet together. It was characteristic of her to take the least attractive work; the work that most people shunned. She would go through life just in that way. There would always be plenty of persons to do the easy work and the pleasant work, and to do it well. "Better than I could possibly do it," said Patience to herself.

Miss Graham was hanging pictures that had been given for the purpose of decorating the room, and Alice Mayse was draping the two mantels with some richly-colored Persian goods. Patience watched them with genuine admiration. "Miss Graham has an artistic eye," she was saying to herself, "and the way she is disposing of her pictures proves it. I should have hung them in straight lines, and in pairs, and have made them stare at each other from opposite sides of the room, just so many feet apart, and exactly in the mathematical center of the spaces between doors and windows. The result would have been as prim and precise as the side of a Quaker meeting-house. Those groups of pictures are very effective and Miss Graham knows exactly where to put each one."

She was quite alone still, and her needle flew rapidly along the breadths of the tasteful ingrain carpet. "Alice Mayse is doing wonders with those mantels. That soft goods falls into artistic folds without any apparent effort on her part, as soon as she touches it. There, now she is going to put up her mantel ornaments : a clock, two vases, a bisque group, a bronze figure. I suppose I should put the clock in the exact middle of the mantel, and then stand a vase just so many inches each side. I should match the bisque group with the bronze figure, and put one at each end, carefully measuring the distance with my eye." Alice has other ideas ; she places the clock at one end of the mantel, puts the bronze figure next, then the two vases side by side, and stands the bisque group at the other end. There is a quick, deft motion of her hands, a little shifting of the articles, and they look thoroughly at home.

"It is a talent, a gift," said Patience ; "and how cheerfully these young people are employing their time and talents in this work ! How I have misjudged them ! They only needed to have a field opened for them, and they have gone to work, each one according to his or her ability. I suppose that

is the reason why so many are standing idle in the market places ; it is just as it was when Christ spoke the parable : no man has employed them. That is the secret of many frivolous and wasted lives. Opportunities for usefulness have been lacking. The few make opportunities, but the many only take them when they are offered, and if they seize them then, as these young people are doing, does the Master expect more ? ”

The large hall was to have a carpet only in the middle of the room. Already a book-case and cabinet organ had been put in place on different sides of the hall, and several young men, assisted by the young girls, were unpacking books and arranging them on the shelves. A few had gathered around the organ, by which a young man was seated, testing its tones. There was some singing, much happy laughter, and a constant flow of pleasant conversation.

Mr. Forrest, who had been directing everything, finally came and sat down by Patience. She was seated on a low stool, and the carpet lay all around her, as she yet sewed rapidly on the long seams. Her gray eyes had a suspicion of moisture in them.

"What do you think of it?" asked Mr. Forrest.

"I think I should like to ask pardon of every person in this room," was her totally unexpected answer.

"Why?"

"For my severe judgment of them, and of the sincerity of their professions."

"I think that as far as they have known of your criticisms, they have acquiesced in them; at least, I mean so far as their own short-comings are concerned. They are quite ready to acknowledge their inconsistencies of living. I certainly am."

"Please do not use that word. I am ashamed to hear it. We are all inconsistent, whether we profess to be Christians or not. But I see now that it was not lack of disposition, but lack of opportunity on the part of your young people."

"And we have to thank you for showing us this way of usefulness, and making opportunities for us to go to work, Miss Preston."

"My share is very small. I am only happy to have made a slight suggestion, but the working up of the plan is entirely your own. There, I believe this carpet is ready to put down." And

Patience rose from her low seat, and picked off the bits of wool from her dress.

"Then we will have it laid directly." And Mr. Forrest summoned some of the young men to his assistance, while Patience went and sat down by the cabinet organ. A group of girls was around her directly.

"Please sing for us, Miss Preston?" they asked.

Since that eventful evening when the new light and life came to Patience, she had accompanied Mrs. Preston to church every Sabbath, and those who sat near her had remarked her sweet contralto voice as she joined in the singing, hence the request.

Patience wheeled around on the stool, and faced the group.

"I cannot sing till I heartily ask your forgiveness for the uncharitable things I have said of you. I thought your professions were all a snare and a delusion. I did not give you credit for very much depth of conviction or feeling, so far as the Christian life is concerned. Frankly, I admit that I supposed you only cared to have a good time, regardless of your influence upon others or the reflex influence upon yourselves. I often said I could

not put much faith in a religion whose professors seemed so little influenced by it. Please forgive me for my harsh judgment. I see now I was only making excuses for my own neglect of duty. I hope my eyes have been opened, and I want you to know of my changed views and feelings. I am sure all of you are happy in doing any work for the Master that presents itself; and I think the more we find to do for him the less we care for merely passing pleasures. You can scarcely know how much good you may accomplish by helping on this plan of Mr. Forrest's; something of the kind is so much needed."

"That is so," echoed several voices.

"And, girls," said Patience, with a tender tremor in her voice, "let us try to help each other on the upward way. We need all the assistance we can get from every quarter."

She had touched a responsive chord, and tears filled many eyes. They were not heartless, those fair young girls, nor thoughtless, except sometimes to outward seeming. Deep down in their hearts were longings for a better life; aspirations after God, and holiness, and Heaven. They could not always voice their own emotions. They had

not been trained to do it ; but the feeling was there, and God knew it.

Happy for us all, the worst as well as the best, that God, not man, is to be our final judge !

From that hour Patience had a strong hold on each of that group of girls.

“Now please sing,” said Miss Graham, after a moment of silence.

Patience turned again to the organ and ran her fingers over the keys. Then, in a clear, sweet voice she sang that familiar hymn, so much in accord with her own thoughts of that day :—

“One more day’s work for Jesus,
One less of life for me !
But heaven is nearer, and Christ is dearer,
Than yesterday, to me ;
His love and light
Fill all my soul to-night.

One more day’s work for Jesus !
How sweet the work has been,
To tell the story, to show the glory,
Where Christ’s flock enter in !
How did it shine
In this poor heart of mine !

Oh, blessed work for Jesus !

Oh, rest at Jesus feet !

There trial seems pleasure, my wants are treasure,

And pain for him is sweet,

Lord, if I may,

I'll serve another day."

Patience had little thought of herself or her listeners while she sang. Her soul was in the words and the music. But before she had finished the first verse every person in the room had joined the circle around her, and they listened breathlessly till she had finished. Her singing was a revelation to them ; even to those who had heard her in church. Her voice was exquisitely pure, and full of expression, and every syllable she sang was articulated with clearness. Plainly she possessed a talent that could be used effectively in the Master's service. The hush that had fallen upon her auditors expressed eloquently the impression her singing had produced.

"Do sing us something more, Miss Preston," said Mr. Dearborn. For once he had been carried outside and above himself.

"What shall I sing?"

"Select something yourself please."

Again Patience ran her fingers over the keys,
wondering within herself what she should select.
Only one thing occurred to her, and she sang it : —

“ One sweetly solemn thought
Comes to me o’er and o’er —
Nearer my home to-day am I
Than e’er I’ve been before.

Nearer my Father’s house,
Where many mansions be ;
Nearer to-day the great white throne,
Nearer the crystal sea.

Nearer the bound of life,
Where burdens are laid down ;
Nearer to leave the heavy cross ;
Nearer to gain the crown.

But, lying dark between,
Winding down through the night,
There rolls the deep and unknown stream
That leads at last to light.

Ev’n now, perchance, my feet
Are slipping on the brink,
And I, to-day, am nearer home, —
Nearer than now I think,

Father, perfect my trust!
Strengthen my power of faith!
Nor let me stand, at last, alone
Upon the shore of death."

As the last words, "Alone upon the shore of death," died away in the silence, more than one person in that group felt, as never before, the need of One to cross with them "the deep and unknown stream," and realized, perhaps for the first time, how awful it would be to "stand alone" in life's latest, supremest hour. How many aspirations were breathed heavenward that they might be prepared for that hour, only He knows.

Patience rose from the organ. Mr. Forrest was standing near. "Is there anything I can do now?" she asked.

"I think we are nearly through for to-day. Won't you come with me, and look at the books in the case?"

As they stood beside the case, Mr. Forrest said, "I want to thank you for singing those hymns. You do not know how much good you may have done," and his manner told how sincerely he felt what he said.

Gradually the young people went away. Mr.

Forrest walked home with Patience. He had been interested in her from the first, but the change that had recently come over her made her seem to him the one woman in all the world !

And it never occurred to him that evening as he walked home with Patience under the clear October sky, in which the stars were already coming out, that he would not like to be the silent member of the firm in a possible partnership, or that he could have any reasonable objections to being known as "the husband of Dr. Preston !"

Meanwhile, Mr. Forrest's studies in microscopy went steadily on, under Dr. Preston's instruction. He was preparing the lecture for some winter evening in the future, and he was also making some discoveries, not laid down in the text-books, thanks to the same able teacher.

CHAPTER XXII.

JIM'S BROKEN LEG.

ONE morning, late in October, there was uproarious excitement among the youthful residents of that outlying portion of Eagle's Mere known as Shanty Town. There was a great gathering of the clans, for once regardless of color, creed, sex or nationality. They carried baskets of all shapes, and of assorted sizes. The initiated understood the signs to indicate a nutting expedition. It was currently reported, and on reliable authority, that the frost had released the chestnuts upon the mountain side from the tenacious clutch of the enveloping prickly burs, and the aforesaid nuts were declared to be lying, as Jim Mahoney tersely expressed it, "thicker'n spatter under the trees."

Jim was the leader of the foray. He was generally the leader in every enterprise that he honored with the light of his freckled countenance. It was tacitly understood that he was to take command

of the crowd, or else he would take leave of them, and Jim's presence was quite needful on such occasions as this. His long arms and legs were of special help in climbing the tall chestnut-trees, and he could climb higher, and shake down more nuts, than any other boy in the whole ragged regiment.

They started out with great waving of banners, and blowing of trumpets, figuratively speaking, also with such provisions as the poorly-filled pantries of the neighborhood could furnish. They expected to spend the entire day on the side of the mountain, nothing doubting — all previous experience to the contrary notwithstanding — that they should come home with baskets filled to overflowing with the indigestible but much-prized chestnuts. After their departure a great and unusual stillness fell upon Shanty Town, and the day promised to be one of more than Sabbath quiet.

In less than three hours an advance guard of the nutting force came hurrying back, breathless, with tales of disaster. At first, in the intense excitement, it was difficult to get a clear account of the affair. It was rumored that several of the children had been killed; then, that five or six

had broken their limbs; but the truth came out at last, when Jim Mahoney was brought home by four of the largest boys, on an ingeniously improvised litter, with a broken leg.

Jim had fallen from a high tree, his long leg had doubled under him, and, of course, was broken. He had been taken up from the ground perfectly unconscious, and his frightened companions, hastily constructing a rude litter, across which they stretched some old blankets which they had brought with them to spread upon the ground for the purpose of receiving the falling chestnuts, started homeward. By the time they reached his mother's door Jim had recovered consciousness, and was making fierce outcries of agony.

Dr. Graham, the favorite physician of all Shanty Town, was at once sent for, but he was out of town. Dr. Forbes, another old physician, was sought by the messenger. Hastily taking up his case of instruments, Dr. Forbes started, and on the way called for Dr. Jones, also an old practitioner, and the two soon reached Mrs. Mahoney's primitive abode. Jim had fully recovered the power of speech. He looked upon the medical men, as they entered, with great displeasure, and

at once exclaimed, "I want Dr. Preston! Send for Dr. Preston!"

The two surgeons paid no attention to his outcries, but proceeded to investigate his injuries.

"Don't you dare touch me!" he shouted. "Send for Dr. Preston!" and he used the uninjured leg with such force and efficiency that the doctors were glad to retreat to a safe distance.

Meanwhile Mrs. Mahoney had sent her youngest hopeful for Miss Preston, and while Jim's sound leg was still flourishing menacingly in the air, Patience appeared upon the scene.

Jim greeted her entrance warmly, as did his mother. Dr. Forbes and Dr. Jones vouchsafed her no notice beyond a cool and somewhat disagreeable nod, and again made an attempt to ascertain the extent of his injuries: his clothing had already been cut away.

No sooner had they touched him than he again shrieked, "Lemme alone! Lemme alone! You hurt me! Let Dr. Preston look at my leg!"

Patience stepped to the bedside, and, with the utmost tenderness, but skillfully, handled the injured leg until she was certain the upper bone was broken in two places. It was a serious case. She

quietly reported the facts to Dr. Forbes and Dr. Jones.

“Have you chloroform with you, Jones?”

This was all the reply Dr. Forbes made to Patience.

Dr. Jones produced a bottle from his pocket, and again the two stood by Jim's side. Dr. Forbes took a clean handkerchief and saturated it with the anæsthetic and handed it to Dr. Jones, who forthwith attempted to put it over Jim's tip-tilted Irish nose.

But Jim was not to be subdued in that summary fashion. His good right arm gave Dr. Jones such a blow that he drew back incontinently. Patience came to the rescue.

“Jim,” said she, putting her soft cool hand on the poor boy's forehead, on which great drops of perspiration had been forced out by his pain, “Jim, we want to help you, and we want to hurt you as little as possible, so we will give you some chloroform, and then you will not feel the pain. All you have to do is just to take long breaths, and soon you will go to sleep, and when you wake up we will have your leg all right. Now, take the chloroform, like a good boy.”

"Yes, I will, if you will give it to me ;" and he caught hold of her hand to detain her.

Dr. Jones ungraciously handed her the handkerchief.

"The bottle, please?" she asked, holding out her hand.

"There is enough, for the present, on the handkerchief," replied Dr. Jones ; but Patience still held her hand extended, and looked at him with her clear gray eyes ; he was obliged to yield the contest, and the bottle.

Jim made no further objections ; Patience applied the handkerchief, folded in cone-shape, to the boy's nose. "Take long breaths, Jim. That's right," as the boy tried to comply with her request, "long breaths ;" and then she put her finger on his pulse and noted the heart's action. The other physicians stood as far away as the size of the room would permit, and looked as dignified as possible ; but Patience, also on her dignity, paid no attention to them. She saturated the handkerchief the second time with the chloroform. Finally, lifting an eyelid, and slapping his cheek gently without detecting sign of consciousness, she said quietly, "You can make your examination now."

For reply Dr. Forbes began to lay out his instruments in readiness to amputate the leg. It was plain to Patience that he intended to cut off the limb without any ceremony.

"You had better make another examination," she said quietly. "I think possibly the leg can be saved."

Dr. Forbes and Dr. Jones glanced at each other, but ignored Patience. Her color grew brighter, otherwise she seemed perfectly cool. She did not intend, however, that poor Jim should lose his leg if there was any chance of saving it. So she went on, "There are two fractures, but they are clean, and I think there is no doubt the leg can be saved, even if it should not be quite straight ; but it would be better than none."

"Dr. Jones, help me fix this table," said Dr. Forbes ; and they took hold of the kitchen table and placed it by the bedside. Then they started to lift the unconscious form of the boy, to lay it on the table.

Mrs. Mahoney had been sitting with her ragged apron to her eyes, weeping vociferously till exhausted, and then groaning dismally, and apparently oblivious of all that was going on. Nevertheless

she had her eyes wide open, and the minute Dr. Forbes and Dr. Jones put their hands on Jim she started up and was at their side instantly.

"Let him alone, ye murtherin' bla'gards ! Would ye be cuttin' off me bye's leg like he was a pig ? Didn't ye hear what Dr. Preston was a-sayin', that ye cud save the leg if ye wanted ?"

It certainly was a trying position for Patience. She did not like to contend with the two old surgeons, but she was sure there was absolutely no need of amputating the leg, and she felt that it was her duty to protest.

"Please make a more careful investigation, and you may not find the injury as serious as you suppose ;" and she put her hand on the bruised and bleeding leg and located the fractures. "Here, and here," pointing out the places ; "and I see no insurmountable difficulty in setting the bone and saving the leg."

"Then save it, Madam ! I wash my hands of the whole business, and wish you joy of your foolish experiment ;" and Dr. Forbes replaced his instruments in their case, and the two men left the house.

"Mrs. Mahoney, send some one to see if Dr.

Graham has come home. The train is just in ;” and then Patience went calmly to work. She gave Jim another whiff of the chloroform, — Dr. Jones had, fortunately, forgotten the bottle, — then she wiped off the blood from the injured part, and deftly went on to set the broken bones. She had the theory perfectly, and also the benefit of three years’ practice in a woman’s hospital in New York. She had besides a cool head and quick judgment. There was really no special difficulty in the case, and when Dr. Graham, who, fortunately, had reached home, came in, she was ready for the splints.

“ Dr. Graham, do you think this is all right ? ”

He examined closely. “ Yes ; you have the bones well placed. Now we will get the splints on, and if this youngster can be kept quiet a few weeks he will have a good leg again.”

Jim was made as comfortable as possible, and Dr. Graham left. Patience did not tell him of her experience with Dr. Forbes and Dr. Jones. If they chose to speak of the affair they were at liberty to do so. Patience was one of the few people who can see all sides of a subject and make due allowances for diversities of opinion. Dr.

Forbes and Dr. Jones had both received their medical education many years before, and since that time the healing art had made much progress. According to their teaching, Jim's leg could not be saved, but must be amputated. Patience, having had the benefit of the advanced state of surgical art, saw no difficulty, at least no insuperable difficulty, in setting and saving the broken leg; but she realized the honesty of their judgment, and gave them full credit for it.

She did not so much resent their unmanly treatment of her, for she knew that physicians of their age looked upon the women who had entered the profession as unwomanly, ambitious interlopers; but, all the same, she intended to stand upon her dignity and reserved rights, for the sake of the women who should come after her. If she must be a pioneer in her profession, in that region of country, she would make as straight and smooth a path for her professional sisters to walk in hereafter as lay in her power. She would leave no stumbling stones for their feet to trip over, if any effort on her part could remove them. But she would not allow herself to consider the conduct of Dr. Forbes and Dr. Jones as a personal affront;

professionally she must disapprove of it, and could not be indifferent to it.

Patience remained with Jim until the effect of the chloroform had fully worn away. At length he opened his eyes.

"And where's me leg?" he asked faintly.

"In bed with you, Jim," answered Patience, as she stood by his side bathing his face with cool water.

"And didn't them men doctors cut it off?"

"No, indeed," said Patience; and Mrs. Mahoney, who had heard the sound of Jim's voice, came into the room as he asked the question.

"Indade, Jim, ye may thank this blessed woman that ye have a leg left at all. The blurdy men had their sharp knives a'ready to murther ye, but Dr. Preston, she spoke up that sharp to them and wouldn't let them be afther a-touchin' ye."

"Jim," said Patience, "you ought to be very thankful that you were not killed when you fell from the tree. I hope you are going to be a good boy after this."

"And indade he's that all the time," said Mrs. Mahoney.

Jim's narrow escape from sudden death, and his

serious accident, had made the poor mother for the time forgetful of the fact that her son Jim had been the torment and terror of her existence.

Jim looked up at his mother's face in great amazement. Never before had he heard such words from the maternal lips. He doubted the evidence of his senses, and seemed to consider the remark as one of the lingering hallucinations induced by the chloroform. Between his weakness and his surprise he could only answer, "Yes'm."

"Now, Jim, you must be very quiet, and try to go to sleep. I am going home for a little while, but I will come back this evening and bring you some beef tea. I am going to stay here to-night and attend to your leg. Don't try to move at all. You must be very patient and quiet, and then I hope you will have as good a leg as ever; but if you grow restless, and fretful, and impatient you may have to lose your leg, after all."

Jim, still dazed by the chloroform and the kindness, again murmured a faint "Yes'm."

The next two weeks were anxious ones for Patience. Jim, notwithstanding his promise, grew very tired and restless, and nearly worked himself into a fever that would certainly have brought on

inflammation in the broken leg. Mrs. Preston took turns with Patience in sitting by the boy. They carried him books to look at, and, as his education had not advanced far enough for him to make much headway in reading, they read to him hour after hour. In this way they hoped to sow some good seed that might germinate in his after-life.

"Dr. Graham," said Dr. Forbes one day, as the two met on the street, "I hear you are attending Jim Mahoney, the boy who fell from the chestnut-tree and broke his leg. How is he getting on?"

"No; I am not attending him. Dr. Preston has had charge of the case from the first, but she sent for me to help her set the leg."

"Can you save it?" said Dr. Forbes, ignoring all allusion to Dr. Preston.

"Dr. Preston is succeeding admirably with the case. I confess, Dr. Forbes, if I had seen the leg before the bones were in place, I might have been tempted to amputate. That woman has pluck and nerve! She has good judgment, too. You and I must acknowledge that these young doctors have the advantage of us in their knowledge of the latest and best methods of surgery."

"Maybe so ; maybe so ;" and Dr. Forbes went his way, much wondering in his mind if Dr. Graham had not heard of his own part in this case. On mature reflection, the man had grace enough to be ashamed of his treatment of Patience, and he was relieved to think that Dr. Graham had not been told of it. Her silence, if it proved she really had been silent, had conquered him. He would never again put a straw in her way ; he might even come to recognize her as a humble member of the noble profession to which he belonged. Concession could go no further.

So here was one stone taken out of the rough highway, and one little place made smooth for the feet that should follow in Dr. Preston's footsteps.

On Christmas morning Jim Mahoney walked up to the office of Dr. Forbes, assisted only by a small cane, and wished him a "Merry Christmas !" Then he called on Dr. Jones with the same good wish.

It is sincerely to be hoped that both men were better pleased to see Jim on two good legs, even if a "woman doctor" had the credit for it, than to have seen him on one leg, and have had the pleasure of saying, "I told you so."

CHAPTER XXIII.

A CAPITAL IDEA.

ON Christmas eve several of the young people met at Alice Mayse's. Miss Graham was there, and so was Mr. Forrest. Later in the evening Mr. Dearborn came in.

"Are you going to 'receive' on New Year's, Alice?" asked Miss Graham. The custom was still much in vogue in Eagle's Mere.

"I have scarcely thought about it yet. If you will come in and receive with me, I think it would be very pleasant," answered Alice.

"I have an idea," interposed Mr. Dearborn.

"Is it very lonely?" asked Alice, in tones of commiseration.

"I congratulate you heartily," said Mr. Forrest, extending his hand.

Mr. Dearborn's good nature was only equaled by his imagination, so he laughed with the company at his own expense.

"What is your precious idea?" It was Miss Graham who asked the question.

"My idea is that it would be a capital thing for you girls to go up to the Hall and receive there: I mean all of you girls."

Mr. Forrest extended his hand again, this time in sincere congratulation: "Dearborn, if you should not have another idea for a week, you might, nevertheless, feel you had not lived in vain! That is a positive inspiration of yours. Don't you think it a happy suggestion, Miss Graham?"

"Yes; if Miss Preston will go. She ought to preside as hostess, for we are indebted to her for the Hall project."

"I am sure she will go, Miss Graham."

"Really, Mr. Forrest, you seem to speak with a great deal of confidence! Have you made such progress in your acquaintance that you can positively assert what Miss Preston will or will not do?" Alice asked the question laughingly, but pointedly.

"We all know how much interest she has taken in the enterprise, and we know, too, how ready she is to help us along," replied Mr. Forrest very coolly.

"But will not everybody feel at liberty to call on us there?" asked Miss Graham. She had always been one of the rigidly exclusives, and the idea of a promiscuous social gathering seemed of questionable propriety.

"Yes, Miss Graham, I hope everybody will feel at liberty to come ; just as much at liberty as they are to go to Heaven," replied Mr. Forrest.

"Then the next thing they do will be to call upon us in our own parlors," she replied.

"Not at all, Miss Graham. There are some places where 'the rich and the poor, the high and the low' meet together on equal footing, and on the ground that 'the Lord is the Maker of them all.' They meet in that way in our churches ; if they do not it is the churches' sin and shame, and they will meet in Heaven on common ground. We want our Hall to be another place where the social distinctions are for the time set aside, and where you, who have been so highly favored, may go and exert your influence to lift up and refine those whom God has put lower in the social scale. Even an angel from Heaven might be glad to come to earth on such a mission. We shall not receive the blessing nor bestow the full benefit of

the work we have undertaken unless we go and give our personal influence in some such way."

"I confess I had not supposed any such thing would be expected of us, but I am fully committed to the work, and will do all I can to help along."

"Then, if we receive at the Hall, we must plan for serving refreshments," said Alice.

"That can easily be done," said Mr. Dearborn, who was one of the warmest advocates of the enterprise. He was already beginning to see its benefits upon the young men of the place. "We can have a small stove put up in the little room next to the gymnasium — the dressing-room, you know — and we can get some one to make coffee and chocolate, and to keep a supply of hot oyster soup and fried oysters. The other refreshments can be carried from our homes, and the tables can be set in the rear of the Hall."

"Yes ; that is perfectly feasible. But are you not afraid that if a general invitation is given to all the young men in town to call there on New Year's day or evening, many who are very rough will come for the sake of the refreshments, and behave rudely, and make it disagreeable for us ?" asked Miss Graham.

Mr. Forrest smiled. "If they come and behave as rudely as I have seen society people do at receptions in Washington, I will certainly have the police take them away. But, seriously, you need not be afraid. Those who come will consider it an honor to be invited, and a great privilege to be waited upon by your fair hands, and will be on their best behavior."

"Didn't he turn that compliment gracefully, Alice?" asked Miss Graham.

"That is irresistible!" exclaimed Mr. Dearborn. "'Sink or swim, live or die, survive or perish,' as the immortal Patrick Henry once remarked, you must give 'heart and hand,' young women, not necessarily to Mr. Forrest, but to this work of Mr. Forrest's."

"I will see that the oysters are furnished, also coffee, chocolate, sugar, crackers, and the little et ceteras, and you can plan for the other refreshments," Mr. Forrest continued. "Mr. Dearborn, have you any idea where we can get a small stove?"

"Yes, indeed; at the stove store!"

"Is that so? I thought they only sold pianos. But we don't propose to buy a new one, if we can

induce some friend to give us a second-hand stove."

"If I am not much mistaken, there is a very respectable old cooking-stove in my mother's summer kitchen. I will interview her on the subject," said Mr. Dearborn.

His powers of imagination being so well known, no one dared place implicit confidence either in the existence, or the reputable condition of the stove, if it had an existence outside of Mr. Dearborn's brain. Alice Mayse arranged the matter satisfactorily by saying, "Well, we shall depend on you to put a stove in the dressing-room, Mr. Dearborn."

"I will do it ;" and when he said he would do a thing he never left the performance to his imagination. That was one of his many good traits.

"But what else can we do to entertain our visitors?" asked Alice.

"What would you do if you kept open house here, at your home?" asked Mr. Forrest.

"Dress in my loveliest gown, wear my sweetest smile, and talk in my most agreeable manner; make myself, in every way, as charming and fascinating as possible."

“Then you are bound to do precisely that when you go to the Hall,” answered Mr. Forrest.

“But I am afraid that will be casting” —

“Don’t finish the quotation, please, for it is not appropriate. You do not understand these young men who will probably call. They are the clerks from the stores, and the workmen from the shops. They have self-respect enough to resent any seeming condescension on your part, and intelligence sufficient to appreciate your very best manners, and a regard for the beautiful that will not under-rate your sweetest smile or loveliest gown. You may lift your eyes incredulously when I tell you that, save for the accident of birth and early advantages, some of them are quite the peers of even Mr. Dearborn and myself! Preposterous, isn’t it? but it is true. Intellectually, they are not inferior to the young men of your set, Miss Alice. Morally — well, I’ll not enlarge on that head.” And Mr. Forrest added, “You need not expect the young men of Shanty Town to honor you, or us, by their presence. It will take time to work down into that social stratum; but I am not without hope we may some day do it.”

“Mr. Forrest, we shall depend upon you to in-

terest Miss Preston in our plans," said Miss Graham, as the two walked home to Dr. Graham's in the starlight.

"Yes; I will see her very soon, and you had better see her, too, and arrange your programme for the day."

"I wish we could persuade her to sing a few of her lovely selections. I think her singing would be a revelation to the young men we hope will call."

"Then you hope they will call, do you? I thought you were afraid they might."

"Mr. Forrest, I confess my prejudices are strong, and probably foolish. But I hope I have some realization of my responsibility, and some wish to exert a good influence over those who can be benefited in any way by me. I am not altogether frivolous; do you think I am?"

"Not by any means. But we all had settled down into our old ways, and needed some such stirring up as Miss Preston has given us. Now as she has shown us a way to work, I am surprised at the enthusiasm with which we are all taking hold."

"I must confess life seems to be better worth living now."

"Yes, Miss Graham ; and we have a Master who is well worth our serving."

"I find it hard, though, to realize that He takes any interest in these little things we are doing."

"Miss Graham, I am just learning to feel that there is no comparative degree with Him. The way in which you wash a Shanty Town baby's face is as important to Him as the way in which a planet rolls. A word of yours that may give a plain young man an aspiration for a better life is as important in His sight as the eloquence of a Spurgeon."

"Why do you think so ?"

"Don't you remember the parable of the talents, Miss Graham ?"

"Yes."

"The man who had but one talent given him was held to as strict accountability as the man who had ten."

"Yes ; I see. I understand now. We shall have to account for the proper use and improvement of our talents, regardless of their number or value."

"Precisely. I am only just coming into a realization of the fact, but it makes me feel like

slighting no opportunity of doing good, even in the humblest and most insignificant particulars."

"I confess it frightens me when I think of it in that way. It makes life seem like a grinding task, and the lash of duty and responsibility seems always swinging about my head to hurry me on," said Miss Graham.

"You must not look at it in that light. Can you not take pleasure in doing all these things for Love's sweet sake: love for Him who first loved us, and gave Himself to redeem us?" Mr. Forrest's voice was tender and reverent. He did not often reveal his inner self so frankly.

Miss Graham's hand trembled on Mr. Forrest's arm, but she made no reply.

"I think the Master wants us to serve him lovingly, gladly, joyfully; with more smiles than tears, more happy laughter than heavy groans. If we love Him, it will be delightful to work for Him, and we shall think more of the privilege, and less of the duty."

"But if one keeps these things always in mind, it makes life so serious, Mr. Forrest."

"Life is serious, whether we think of our duties and responsibilities or not; but it does not follow

that because it is serious it is therefore sad, does it? Who are the happiest people we know in this town, Miss Graham?"

"Well, I should say your mother, and my father, and old Mrs. Benson."

"Yet they have all had their full share of trouble?"

"Yes; but they are getting old, and these things, I mean duties and responsibilities, come more easily to them than to the young, Mr. Forrest."

"Well, why not say that these duties are privileges, and so specially appropriate to the young?"

"This is what troubles me, Mr. Forrest. You know how shocked we all were when we first met Miss Preston because she expressed her doubt in the reality of religion on account of the indifference and half-heartedness of its professors. But we felt the force of her argument, and I think it made us more careful in our living; and that has caused several questions to spring up in my mind. Alice Mayse and I have discussed the subject extensively. You know we are both church members, and we are asking each other whether some things we have been in the habit of enjoying are

quite consistent ; and there is where my trouble comes in. We can't decide the question."

"Here we are at your father's ; if you will allow me to go in, we will ask him to throw some light on this vexed question of amusements."

"Yes ; do come in."

Dr. Graham met them cordially ; after a few commonplace remarks Mr. Forrest said :

"Dr. Graham, we were talking about amusements ; whether it is right for professors of religion to engage in them ; and we want your opinion."

"Amusements ? Certainly you must have amusements ; not as the end and sole object of living, but as recreation to help you do your duties and bear your burdens better. Put the question this way : ' Must people have recreation ? ' and then it answers itself. Amusement is to be the recreation, not the business, of life. But innocent amusement may become a snare and a temptation of the adversary when carried to excess. That is the rock upon which so many make shipwreck. They consider amusement the sole object of their existence. They run after happiness, and she, butterfly-like, leads them a long and weary chase, and if caught

she is crushed in the catching, and all her beauty is gone."

"But, papa, I am in doubt what amusements are innocent. You know I have danced all my life; I never thought to ask the question whether it could possibly be wrong till lately. Tell me, papa, what you think?"

"My dear, if I had thought it wrong I certainly would not have allowed you to be ignorant of my opinion till now. I know very many devoted Christian people are utterly opposed to it. I must say that early education has very much to do with one's ideas in regard to many things, and this is a case in point. As an exercise, when not carried to excess, it is graceful and healthful. But I want you to distinctly understand two things: one is, that I do not approve of the modern round dances; the other is that the most serious objection to this form of amusement is that those who are fond of it find it difficult to indulge in it moderately. Is it not so, Posie?"

"Yes, papa, I believe it is; I am afraid that has been my experience."

"This whole subject of amusements, Mr. Forrest, it seems to me, is one that must be left to the

individual conscience. It strikes me that if young people are educated up to the proper ideal of Christian living — of Christian living as a matter of privilege rather than duty — they will not go far out of the way in their amusements. The trouble is, that they have no idea what to do, except to go to church. And that reminds me, Mr. Forrest, that I am much pleased with your Reading Room project. It is a step in the right direction, and it has already taken a strong hold on our young people.”

“You must thank Dr. Preston for the idea,” replied Mr. Forrest.

“I am inclined to think we will have to thank Miss Doctor for several things,” answered Dr. Graham warmly.

“And do you remember, Mr. Forrest, when she first came here we looked upon her as a publican and sinner, we Pharisees?” said Miss Graham, with a smile at the recollection.

“Miss Preston frankly acknowledges her mistake in blaming religion for the faults of its professors. But she had a high standard of duty even then; I do not know that it can be much higher now; but her ruling motive seems to be love to the Master.”

Dr. Graham said this earnestly. He had come to know Miss Preston well in these latter days ; they had met in many a sick-room, and by several dying beds, and he was beginning to acknowledge to himself the rare fitness of an educated, self-reliant, skillful, yet tender Christian woman physician for such places ; she knew how to minister to a sick soul as well as to a sick body. He had seen more than one hand cling to hers till it released all hold on earth ; and he had heard her voice in prayer for those whose feet were crossing the dark river and in whose ears her tones almost mingled with the strains of welcome on the further shore. Yes, and he knew, too, more than one poor wretch whose life would have gone out into utter blackness if she had not pointed the trembling soul to the Saviour who died for just such creatures.

“A death-bed repentance” ? “An eleventh-hour call” ? True ; but, thank God ! there was a dying thief pardoned by Christ, and there were laborers called and employed at the eleventh hour.

Mr. Forrest rose to take his leave. “By the way, Miss Graham, I suppose you have the latest news from Charley ?”

She colored brightly. "I don't know: what is it?"

"He expects to come East this spring."

"Does he, truly? He has not told me of it."

"Then I am afraid I have spoiled a plan to surprise you. You need not mention to him that I have told you, unless you think best." Mr. Forrest lifted his hat gracefully, with a "Good-night, Miss Graham! good-night, Doctor!" and went out.

Miss Preston had never heard of Charley Forrest, his brother, and of course did not know what every one else in Eagle's Mere knew perfectly well, that Miss Graham was engaged to Charley Forrest. Patience had taken for granted, seeing the constant intimacy between the two, that Mr. Forrest and Miss Graham were affianced lovers: she thought them admirably suited to each other, and honestly considered Miss Graham was to be congratulated for her choice.

This mistake had put Mr. Forrest and Patience on very easy footing, as Patience felt perfect freedom in his society, and it never occurred to her that he could possibly entertain other than friendly, not sentimental, feeling towards her; so it came to

pass that his microscopic investigations, under the direction of Miss Preston, were most indefatigably pursued, and she never dreamed that she was under the glass.

Christmas morning Mr. Forrest called at Dr. Graham's and left a little newspaper slip for Miss Graham, with the message that "The unpretending lines are so much in the line of our talk last evening I am sure you will enjoy them." The poem proved to be on the subject of serving the Master in the smallest and most humble ways, and was entitled —

FOR THY SAKE.

With the light of the early morning
I open my weary eyes,
And ponder over the ceaseless round
Of toil that before me lies.

My life seems empty and useless,
Spent in humblest household care;
No time to work for the Master;
Hardly a moment to spare

For sowing the seed of the kingdom
In the world's great harvest field;
Seed that the Lord has promised
Abundant harvest shall yield.

I take up the Book beside me,
And think, as I open to read,
“If only my Father in Heaven
Would send me the message I need!”

’Tis a faint and faithless prayer,
But my eye is caught by the word,
“Whether ye eat or whether drink,
Do all as unto the Lord.”

A still and solemn rapture
Fills my whole heart at the sight,
And the life that seemed so useless
Glow with a radiance bright.

I close the precious volume,
Then kneel for a moment in prayer,
And the Master walks beside me
As I go through my round of care.

I lay my hands to each burden
And say, “for Thy dear sake,”
And the homely life grows holy
As my tasks new meaning take.

Each night I am worn and weary,
But I tell the Master all;
How I am trying to serve Him;
How often I falter and fall.

Still, for love's sake, I am striving
My lowly place to fill ;
"As unto the Lord," my motto —
My pleasure to do His will.

Miss Graham's eyes were filled with tears when she finished reading, but a new light had dawned upon her soul.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE NEW YEAR'S RECEPTION.

NEW YEAR'S DAY came on Wednesday. The "Luminary," on Monday and Tuesday evening, announced that "open house" would be kept at the Reading Room on New Year's, and invited the men of Eagle's Mere to call. This invitation was intended to include old as well as young.

It was wonderful what a hold the Reading Room had taken upon the young people. One reason for this, and a very prominent reason, too, was the fact that Mr. Forrest had championed the project from the first. It was considered quite safe, even by the most exclusive circle in Eagle's Mere, to follow Mr. Forrest's leadership. There was no break in his genealogy back for several generations.

Mr. Dearborn was equally interested. He and Mr. Forrest were fast friends, notwithstanding the

disparity in age ; but Mr. Dearborn was rapidly outgrowing his pride in his extreme youth, and was less often heard to refer to himself as "the youngest member of the Eagle's Mere bar." In fact, he was finding a satisfaction in living to some extent outside himself ; a new experience to him.

The preparations at the hall were on an elaborate scale. The rooms were decorated with holly and pine ; the tables were loaded with dainty refreshments such as the housekeepers of Eagle's Mere excelled in providing. Before ten o'clock Miss Preston, Miss Graham, Alice Mayse, and six or eight other girls, as well as several of the younger married women of the place, were in readiness to receive calls. Each had dressed herself as tastefully as if "receiving" in her own parlor. Miss Preston, in her dress of ruby velvet and satin, trimmed with iridescent beads, and wearing exquisite lace at her throat and wrists, was a revelation to all. Hitherto she had only worn soft gray or black dresses, of severest cut and make, which were admirably adapted to her work. But the ruby velvet was wonderfully becoming, and set off her face to great advantage. Every eye looked at her admiringly as she entered the Hall,

perfectly unaware of the sensation she was making.

"Magnificent woman!" said Mr. Dearborn as she gracefully made her way past him and sat down by the side of an embarrassed-looking young man who had come very early and seemed quite lost in the gay crowd of young people with which the room was filled up.

She understood his embarrassment, and also how to overcome it, and before the young man fairly knew it, he was talking readily and naturally to the most stylish-looking woman in the Hall! The tact that had been so useful to her in her profession came in good play now.

"Do you like the decorations of the Hall?" This was her first question.

The young man glanced around. He had an intelligent face, and evidently had ideas of his own, if one could only draw them out.

"Yes; they are beautiful."

"Where do you get the holly?"

"It grows on the hills, not far away."

"Does the rhododendron grow around here?"

"Yes, indeed; and there is something very peculiar about the rhododendron, too. The flower-

buds are formed in the fall for the next summer's blooming. 'If you cut one open now you will find the delicate pink of the future flower.'

"That is remarkable, indeed. But what wonderful things Nature does, and how many lovely things she hides away, just as she hides the pink of the rhododendron buds! Did you ever examine the different parts of a flower under a microscope?"

"No; I have never seen a microscope."

"Then you ought to see a fern-leaf—just the smallest bit of a fern-leaf—under a good magnifier. You know the rows of brown dots on the back of the ferns? that is the fruit, and under a powerful magnifying-glass these dots seem to be beautiful berries, as perfect as a raspberry. I think there is a book in the library here that has a picture showing a magnified section of a fern-leaf. Let us go and look at it."

It was a triumphant moment for the bashful young man when he walked across the room with Miss Preston by his side, and many an envious eye was turned upon him. The book was speedily found, and soon a circle of interested listeners surrounded Miss Preston, as she explained the pict-

ures of various objects as seen under a magnifier. A new field of thought was opened up to some of those young men, and it would be very strange if they were not led to investigate further into the wonderful mysteries of Nature; and the upward path once chosen, whither might it not lead?

Miss Graham and Alice Mayse, as well as the other girls, took their cue from Miss Preston, and devoted themselves to interesting and entertaining the more diffident of their callers. The decorations of the room, the pictures, the library, all furnished material for conversation. Occasionally some one sat down and played a simple piece of music on the organ, and Miss Preston was asked to sing, and each time she had an appreciative throng of people around her.

Certainly every man who called was on his best behavior. Mr. Forrest had prudently engaged a policeman to be present, but after an hour or two that official had so satisfactorily gauged the temper of the coming and going crowd that he did not deem his services necessary, and quietly left the Hall, only returning at intervals to take a glance into the room to make sure his confidence was not misplaced.

Many of the young men lived in the plainest and most comfortless boarding-houses, and seldom sat down to an appetizing meal; yet they conducted themselves with a propriety at the refreshment tables that quite surprised and delighted their entertainers. Some few of them looked questioningly upon the mysterious squares of white linen that were furnished each one with his plate, evidently having never made the acquaintance of table napkins; but a glance at some one more familiar with the usages of polite society gave them the clew to the mystery, and they ventured to unfold the shining damask and use it, if awkwardly, yet effectually.

Later in the day the Hall was filled with young men, and older ones, of a different class. Dr. Graham was there, and Dr. Moorhead, both of whom were now sincere and admiring friends of Dr. Preston, and both earnest well-wishers to the new enterprise. They soon saw Patience standing near the center of the room, and went up to her.

"Let me congratulate you, Miss Doctor, on the remarkable success of this whole affair," said Dr. Graham heartily. "In which congratulation I join," added Dr. Moorhead.

Patience simply answered : " I deserve no credit except for a mere suggestion. Mr. Forrest, Mr. Dearborn and several others have elaborated my idea, and here you begin to see results."

" And only begin, I hope ; but it is a good beginning," answered Dr. Graham.

Just then Dr. Forbes and Dr. Jones, arm in arm, sauntered near.

" Here, Brother Forbes ! Brother Jones ! I want to introduce you to a recent comer into our ranks. Dr. Preston, let me make you acquainted with Dr. Forbes and Dr. Jones," said Dr. Moorhead. " You doctors ought to become acquainted now if you have not before."

Patience bowed graciously. Nothing in her look or manner indicated that she had ever met them before. The men were shrewd enough to see that she was in the good graces of Dr. Graham and Dr. Moorhead, the leading practitioners of Eagle's Mere, of all that region, in fact. They could not afford either to snub her or ignore her, as they had once done. Evidently she had kept the fact of their unmanly treatment of her to herself. They had grace enough to be ashamed of the affair as they remembered it after their anger

died away, so each extended a hand with a cordial, "I am glad to make your acquaintance, Dr. Preston."

Yea, verily, a large-sized stumbling-stone had been rolled aside and out of the way!

The visitors came and went. Sometimes the Hall was well-filled, and again but few were present. Most of the people who called appeared to be very friendly to the enterprise. Of course some were skeptical as to any good results. A sour-looking, middle-aged man, after making a tour of the Reading Room and gymnasium, and a long stop at the refreshment table, where he conscientiously tried to test the quality of every edible, asked an acquaintance whom he afterward met, —

"Do you suppose these young people think they are going to reform this town, and bring about the millenium, by means of a few books and newspapers, a pair of dumb bells and a turning-pole? It strikes me they will find the means inadequate to the end."

To which his friend replied, "Oh! they are too wise to attempt the experiment on us old fellows. It would take more than they can show here to reform us."

Another middle-aged man, who had evidently made previous calls at places where stronger refreshments than those served at the Hall had been indulged in by him, took possession of Mr. Dearborn. The young lawyer convoyed him around the room, but nothing seemed to interest him very much till he reached one of the well-spread tables. He sat down by it with a sigh of great content, and his eye wandered inquiringly over the viands.

"Will you have a cup of coffee?" It was Alice Mayse who asked the question, with a sweet, winning smile.

"If you please, Miss," making as dignified a bow as his condition would admit of.

He tasted the coffee critically, and then put it down with elaborate carefulness on the table beside him.

The man was well-known in Eagle's Mere. In his early days he had been considered a young man of more than common ability; in fact, he was the pride and boast of the town. He belonged to a "good family," as the current phrase went, and had enjoyed every advantage of education and travel that money could command. But it was the old, sad story. He learned to love the wine-

cup. The excitement of stimulants gave brilliancy to his imagination, and force to his words, and sparkle to his wit. Friends expostulated with him in vain. They told him of his danger, but he laughed at their warnings; and all the time the habit was binding him, soul and body, with its relentless iron fetters.

That was many New Years before this one; and now the wreck of that man sat beside the table and tried to steady his reeling brain, and to conduct himself with the propriety that, even in his condition, he recognized was due to the company and the occasion. If an object lesson had been needed, setting forth the necessity of some such saving institution as the promoters of the Reading Room hoped it would be, here was the lesson. The man himself, John Hodgson, seemed to have a dim sense of that fact, for he said, addressing the young people around him, — “I’ve been wandering around town all day trying to get the young men to come here. It’s going to be a good thing; indeed it is,” nodding his head in an emphatic manner. His words were sadly clipped and confused, but no one felt like smiling; indeed, who can smile in the presence of a self-ruined soul?

He took another sip of coffee, holding the cup very carefully in his trembling hands, lest he drop it, and then he went on, — “ Why did not some one think of something like this when I was a young man? There was no place for me to go except the saloons ; and now look at me ! ” he added, with a burst of maudlin tears.

It was a painful scene, but perhaps a profitable one. There were other young men in the room who had started on the same career, and only the grace of God, and all the restraining influences that could be thrown around them, could keep them from following in John Hodgson's footsteps. Did they realize their danger as they looked at him ?

Mr. Forrest was standing near Patience, and both were watching the group at the table. A sad expression rested on Miss Preston's face. Mr. Forrest noted it, and could divine the cause.

“ I feel so utterly powerless in presence of a soul so fallen from its high estate ! Disease, however severe or hopeless it seems, affects me differently. I always work with some degree of hope, at least to prolong life as long as life lasts. But in a case like this there is absolutely nothing to do.”

"Then prevention is the more necessary, Miss Preston."

"So it is. But it seems so dreadful to see those men who might have done so much for themselves, their friends, and the world, going down to the blackness of darkness! Many of them were once so full of hope and ambition! and they all have friends whose hearts are breaking in anguish at their worse than wasted lives. My only comfort is that, in the final day, the Judge will put the fearful responsibility of ruining these souls where it rightly belongs."

"Where does it belong, Miss Preston?"

"The responsibility rests upon the men and women who mould public sentiment. It rests upon those who can indulge to a safe extent, and then stop, and, in their self-indulgence, forget that their example is influencing those who are not so constituted, and who, encouraged by that example, take the first glass, and, having tasted, must keep on. It rests upon Christian men and women who, while recognizing the fact that the use of wine, and ale, and beer to a moderate extent, is not in itself wrong, are not willing to give it up entirely for the sake of those who cannot use

it in moderation. People sometimes call me a 'crank' on this subject, Mr. Forrest ; but it must be admitted that if I err, it is on the safe side."

"I believe you are right, but I confess candidly that I am a recent convert to your opinion."

"Mr. Forrest, that man — what did you say his name is ?"

"John Hodgson."

"Well, he seems disposed to talk. Suppose you ask him what the early influences were that brought him to his present condition? Do you think he will resent it?"

"O, no! he has gone too far for that."

They moved up near the table and listened a few moments to the conversation that was going on around John Hodgson, who was still lamenting that it was too late for anything to do him any good. The strong coffee had sobered him, and he was talking more connectedly.

"Mr. Hodgson," said Mr. Forrest, "have you any objections to telling us what the early influences were that you are deploring?"

The man looked up at Mr. Forrest suspiciously. He was quite accustomed to ridicule, and to being made an object of derision, but polite interest in

himself or his history was something he seldom met in his later years. Mr. Forrest's face reassured him. He saw only genuine sympathy there, and he answered slowly : —

“ Well, my father always kept the best wine and whiskey in the house, and he drank it, too, and it did not hurt him. He could take one glass, and be satisfied, but if I took one glass I always wanted two more. Father used to say a man was a fool who could not stop drinking when he had taken all that was good for him ; he never had any trouble to do it. I suppose I was a fool, for I could not stop after I once commenced.”

“ The sins of the father visited upon the child,” said Miss Preston, in a whisper, to Mr. Forrest.

“ Then when we young men went out to spend the evening with the young women, — there was a gay crowd of us young men,” he added reflectively, as his mind drifted into the happy long-gone past ; “ there was Tom Price : poor Tom ! he died years ago, of delirium tremens, the doctor said ; and there was Henry Wilson, he was such a grand fellow, and had a first-rate start in the law business, and was getting on splendidly, but he died suddenly, after a few days' sickness, and, though his

friends said it was brain fever, everybody knew it was drinking that killed him. Then there was George Mason " —

"But what about your evening visits, Mr. Hodgson?" said Mr. Forrest, interrupting the flow of reminiscence that bid fair to go on indefinitely.

"O, yes! Well, before we went home, we always had refreshments, and there was sure to be wine, or punch, or mint julep, or apple toddy, or eggnog — something to drink, at any rate — and we often took too much. But the worst of it was that when we went away, we were not satisfied till we stopped at a saloon and had something more. You see if a man likes whiskey or any kind of drink, when he once gets a taste of it he cannot stop with a little. He keeps on until he has too much, and you know the consequences. I tell you what, young men, if I were young again, nothing in this world would induce me to touch a drop of any kind of liquor, not even beer. It is a thousand times easier to stop before you begin than afterwards. Take warning by me," he added, as he rose to his feet, "take warning by me, and don't form the dreadful habit."

He bowed again to the circle around him — the old instinct of politeness was not lost, fallen though John Hodgson was from his early estate — and started to leave the Hall. Mr. Forrest accompanied him to the door.

“Do you think, Mr. Forrest, that this thing is going to dry up the saloons? All the saloon keepers are down on it, but I say it is a grand idea — a grand idea,” and the poor man looked around the room more appreciatively than when he came in. “Yes, it is a grand idea, but it is too late for me! I had my chance once, and a man can’t live his life over again; if I could live mine over again it would be a different life. Good-by!”

John Hodgson shook Mr. Forrest’s hand heartily, recognizing in him one who would help him in any effort he might make towards a better life, and then he walked slowly away. Mr. Forrest stood at the door watching him as he made his way down the street, and half-hoping some good impression had been made that would be abiding. No doubt the man had sincerely felt all he had said. No doubt he had longings to burst the fetters that bound him, and to escape the fearful thralldom.

But his will-power was gone, and, in presence of his destroyer, he was helpless. So whatever good resolutions he may have made when he left the Hall, they were just strong enough to carry him to the door of the nearest saloon, and, even while Mr. Forrest stood looking after him, he saw him enter the place where he had lost soul and body. Mr. Forrest turned and went into the Hall. He realized more fully than ever before what they had undertaken, and he felt for a moment very much as the critic of the afternoon had expressed it: the means seemed very inadequate to bring about the desired results. Still he could but hope that some little good might be accomplished, with God's blessing. They must have that, if any real good was to be done. John Hodgson was an example of how powerless a man is to help himself if left alone and unaided. Mr. Forrest had never considered that the Reading Room was even a religious institution, strictly speaking, much less that it was to take the place of any religious institution, but he had hoped and prayed that an influence might commence there that would finally and naturally lead the young people into the church. But, though wholly a secular affair, they needed

God's blessing and guidance ; there was no doubt about that.

After the visitors had all left — it was nearly nine o'clock in the evening — the young people who had been busily engaged all day, gathered around one of the refreshment tables on which had been placed hot coffee and oysters, and they discussed the events of the day.

“ Well, are you all satisfied ? ” A young man, who had been rather skeptical in regard to the plan, but who had finally entered enthusiastically into it, asked the question.

“ Yes.”

“ Fully ? ”

“ Yes, and no.”

“ More than satisfied.”

“ Pleased with the future prospects even better than with the day's performance.”

Such were some of the replies that were made.

“ We have had very little experience of the hydropathic treatment in this case,” said Miss Preston.

Alice Mayse looked up wonderingly. “ The rest of us don't know as much about these *pathics* as you do. Please explain.”

"She means wet blankets and cold water *douche* baths," replied Miss Graham.

A ray of light broke upon Alice Mayse. "Stupid, wasn't I? I had only one little damper to my delight. I overheard Mrs.—— I am not going to tell you her name — say she thought it was very improper for us to be so polite to such very plain people. She presumed they would be calling upon us at our homes very soon."

"And I," said another person, "heard a woman say she thought these indiscriminate gatherings were very demoralizing: but I took great pleasure in replying that the saloons and variety theatres are equally so. As her only son is a frequent visitor at these places, I trust she understood my allusion."

"We must not for one minute think we are going to revolutionize the town, or work a great moral reform all at once by means of our efforts here," remarked Mr. Forrest. "If we can do anything towards elevating public sentiment by inducing some of the young men to substitute these refining amusements and occupations for the saloon and the low theatre we shall be well repaid for our labors. We may be able to place only a

very small obstruction on their downward pathway ; still, if it is sufficient to make them stop and think where they are going, it will be a point gained. We must not expect too much, and then we shall not be easily disappointed. The work will often seem discouraging, but we must keep steadily on ; and we must remember that strength to do this is not of ourselves ; it must come from beyond and above ourselves. Let us feel our dependence upon God, whose work, I trust, it is."

Patience glanced around at the earnest young faces, and thought, with a pang of self-reproach, "Are these the young people I fancied so frivolous a few short months ago ?"

"Sing for us, Miss Preston, before we go home," pleaded one of the young girls as they finally left the table, after a long and pleasant talk.

"What shall I sing ?"

"Something that you sung here once before — the day we fitted up the room, it was. It has rung in my ears ever since."

"What was it ?"

"‘Nearer Home,’ I think it was called."

Patience knew what she referred to, and then others echoed the request, so she sat down and

played her own accompaniment while she sang the beautiful words of Phœbe Cary. They were peculiarly appropriate for the New Year, and the pathos of her voice added an indescribable charm to the sentiments of the poet.

Certainly many souls had been lifted a little higher, and set a little farther on the Heavenward way by that New Year's experience.

Mr. Forrest walked home with Patience; neither of them talked much, but they felt better acquainted with each other than ever before. If Mr. Forrest recognized a warmer feeling than friendship in his regard, Patience did not suspect it.

She went into the office, and found her mother's trunk packed, and her mother ready to start to New York the next morning.

Another of those long, yellow, legal-looking envelopes had been taken from the post-office that day after Patience went to the Hall.

CHAPTER XXV.

A "SISTER DORA."

THE next morning Mrs. Preston started for New York ; Patience went with her to the train, found a pleasant seat in the parlor car, and when she kissed her good-by whispered in her ear, " Tell Dillaye I have at last learned to forgive."

" Thank God ! " was all Mrs. Preston could say ; and then the conductor rang the bell and Patience left the cars, and the rushing train was soon beyond sight and hearing.

Two weeks later Mrs. Preston came home ; Patience met her at the depot.

" You look ten years younger, mother ! The trip has done you so much good ! " exclaimed Patience, when Mrs. Preston stepped off the car. " Now, you dear old mother, let me tuck you under my arm and take you home ; are you able to walk ? "

" Walk the little distance to our home, Patience ?

I feel so light-hearted I think I could walk back to New York if necessary."

"I know what that means, mother! You have good news."

"God has been very good to us, and he has answered our prayers. O, my child! I think we ought to walk humbly before him all our days henceforth, for his compassion upon us."

"Tell me all about it; and about Dillaye, mother."

"I will, after we get home." And she told her story to Patience as the two sat by the warm fire in the cosy office, Mrs. Preston in a large, comfortable arm-chair, with a soft cushion for her head to rest upon; and as she related it the tears fell from her daughter's eyes like rain. When the story was finished Patience drew a long breath, as if a great load had been lifted from her heart.

"Now, mother dear, you must have a good long rest. I hope your days of anxiety are over, and that the remainder of your life may be spent in peace and freedom from care. You have truly passed through much tribulation, and ought now to reap the peaceful fruits. I am going out to hurry up Sally's deliberate footsteps, and to hasten

dinner ; then you are to lie down and rest as long as you feel like it."

Patience started out, but stopped for a moment to pass her hand caressingly over her mother's soft white hair, and then she stooped down and kissed the pale tired face. "It seems good to have you here again, and to think —" And she went out to expedite Sally's slow movements.

The week following Mrs. Preston's return the lecture on Microscopy, that Mr. Forrest had prepared with such painstaking, was given in the Reading Room. It was a free lecture, and it was illustrated by the aid of Dr. Preston's powerful microscope, which threw up on the screen marvelously ugly monsters disporting in a drop of water taken, the previous autumn, from a wayside ditch, and kept till now in a glass jar. The hydrant water also held numerous living creatures, so ferocious in aspect and so insatiable in appetite, that the magnified view of them was almost enough to make one abjure water as a beverage.

The lecture was simply scientific enough to be accurate, but aimed rather to interest those who knew little of the wonders of nature as revealed under the microscope. Many objects were magni-

fied before the audience, and each new picture on the screen drew forth loud exclamations of surprise and admiration. For two hours the crowd listened and gazed, wondered and admired, and when the lecture closed a number of young men approached Mr. Forrest with an urgent request to be formed into a class in microscopy. The class was organized then and there, and an impetus given to some lives that took them away from low associates and started them on a career of usefulness.

Not a religious lecture?

No, not strictly speaking; but Mr. Forrest led his audience "from nature up to nature's God," and impressed at least this lesson: that nothing is beneath God's notice; nothing too small for him to provide for, and if he has so wondrously organized the minutest living creatures, and cares for their daily and hourly needs, surely he will not forget to provide for us, his children!

Ministers are sometimes severely criticised for stepping aside from their peculiar and proper work of saving souls and devoting a part of their time and strength to scientific pursuits. But they often find their happiest illustrations in this very field. There is strict concord between natural and re-

vealed religion. The man or woman who is discouraged and disheartened, who fears that God has forgotten them, or will not provide for them, will often get a lesson of faith and trust by a knowledge of God's care for his lowliest creatures. Christ himself, the Teacher sent from God, who spake as never man spake, and taught as never man taught, referred his disciples to the flowers of the field and the birds of the air as objects whose study would confirm their faith in an all-wise, all-loving Father. He knew, our sympathizing elder Brother, how often our hearts would fail us in the heat and burden of the day. He knew how, in our toil for daily bread, the question, What shall I eat and what shall I drink? would often seem impossible to answer. He knew how anxiously the problems of life would be studied, and how hopeless their solution seem; but always before our eyes we see the grass of the field, the flowers of the meadow and hillside, and the birds of the air. So He, the wise Teacher, made them object lessons for all time, to His children, and as we look at them we again hear His tender, calm, persuasive voice saying, "Oh ye of little faith! Wherefore did ye doubt?"

That lecture on Microscopy was not in vain. Mr Forrest prepared it from a Christian standpoint, and its influence was on the side of Christ, even though it was not a religious lecture.

But now the evening with the microscope was a thing of the past, and life was going on as usual at Eagle's Mere. It was a little elevated from what it had once been. Influences were at work that were slowly yet surely lifting up the young people. The change was not great ; not very marked. It did not amount to any thing like a reformation. Good seed had been sown, and it was quietly germinating. There was less feverish seeking after amusements, and more sense of personal responsibility. It was noticeable that the churches were better filled ; Sabbath-school teachers were easier to find ; week-day meetings were better attended ; people whose religion had consisted in the name, now put it in the daily living. There was nothing very remarkable about it, but the Kingdom of God cometh not with observation !

One morning in March a young boy rang Dr. Preston's bell.

"Can you go to Mrs. Fuller's right away?"

"Where is it? Where does she live?"

"In Shanty Town : across the street from Mrs. Mahoney. Jim, you know, broke his leg."

"O, yes ! I know. Who is sick ?"

"Mrs. Fuller's girl ; Mary Fuller. She's been livin' in New York, and came home last week."

Patience made herself ready while she was talking, and started at once.

She found Mrs. Fuller in a poor shanty of three rooms ; she was a widow, with four children. Mary, the eldest, was about eighteen ; she had been at service in New York for several years, as child's nurse ; she had come home on a visit the week before, and had been complaining for two or three days.

"It just seems to be a misery in her back and her head, and last night she was that hot it seemed as if she'd burn up," explained her mother. "But she's out of her head this morning," she added, as she took Patience into the front room, where the sick girl was tossing on a poor, hard bed.

Patience examined her carefully, and asked a few questions, but the girl was too delirious to reply.

"Mrs. Fuller, take all the children into the other room, and keep them there. Don't allow

them to come in here once again while Mary is sick. Carry out their clothes, and yours, too."

It was pitifully easy to obey this last command, for there was very little clothing, or anything else in the room, and it was soon cleared of everything but the bed on which Mary was lying, and two wooden chairs. There was no carpet on the floor.

"Now take a bucket of warm water and wipe up the floor. Make it as dry as possible ; you do not need to put much water on."

Patience watched her while she washed up the floor ; it needed it sadly.

"You must open that window, the one farthest from the bed. Raise it about six inches, and put a stick under it to hold it up. Will it come down from the top?"

An investigation disclosed the fact that the accommodating window would come down from the top, or do almost anything else required, as the old sash was simply held in place by a couple of nails, so it was lowered six inches from the top, and a nail put in to keep it in position. The fresh air that entered was most refreshing.

"Won't she take cold?" asked Mrs. Fuller, pointing to the bed.

"No, indeed. Don't you see she is burning up with fever? She will feel better for this cool, fresh air. Now, Mrs. Fuller, Mary will lie quietly for a time, because I have given her some soothing medicine. I am going away for a little while, but will be back directly. Remember what I said, and keep all the children out of the room. Don't go in yourself unless you hear Mary call."

Mrs. Fuller promised to obey orders.

Patience went straight to Dr. Graham's office. He was at home, and greeted her with his usual warmth.

"I am delighted to see you, Miss Doctor! To what am I indebted for this pleasure? I know you have a purpose in coming; I read it in your face."

"I want you to come with me and see a patient I have just been called to. She is Mrs. Fuller's daughter, and has very lately come from New York. I will not tell you my diagnosis till you see her."

"Certainly I will go." And he put on his hat and overcoat, and they started out into the raw air.

"A regular March day, Miss Doctor," said Dr.

Graham, holding his hat with one hand, as they made difficult progress against the wind.

"Yes ; it is a trying month to our patients."

"Have you many just now ?"

"Not many at present, I am happy to say, Dr. Graham."

Dr. Graham laughed.

"We are generally supposed to thrive on other people's misery, and to be happiest when most people are ill, of course provided they employ us to alleviate their sufferings. It strikes me you are more philanthropic than most young practitioners can afford to be, if you are 'happy' to have few patients."

"You will understand me better after you see Mary Fuller. As a rule, if people insist on being ill, I would like my full share of healing them. You see I am just like the rest of you, Dr. Graham."

"Only better than we are ; a great deal better, Miss Doctor."

Later he echoed the remark with additional emphasis ; but that was after he came away from Mary Fuller's room.

They went into the sick room together. Mrs.

Fuller was following them, but Patience motioned her to go back. She closed the door, and then they stood by the bedside. Dr. Graham put on his glasses and stooped down to look at the sick girl more closely. The next moment he uttered an exclamation of surprise, gave another critical look at the girl, then stood upright and glanced at Patience.

"Well?" said she.

"You know what it is, Miss Doctor. What is to be done about it?"

"I am going to stay here and take care of her."

"Absurd! You are not!"

"Will you attend to my patients? Here is a list of them," writing rapidly, and handing him a paper.

"But, my dear Miss Doctor, you cannot even be half-comfortable here, aside from every other consideration."

"Dr. Graham, is Mrs. Fuller capable of managing this case alone?"

"Of course not, with her family to look after."

"Can a hired nurse be obtained to do it, even if Mrs. Fuller had plenty of money to pay such a nurse?"

"It is very doubtful, I confess."

"Well, you know what the consequences of inattention and carelessness would be in this particular case, Dr. Graham?"

"I think the girl will die, at any rate."

"But is it not very desirable to stamp out the disease right here?"

"Of course; but how are you going to do it?"

"By staying here with this girl, and by having the family vaccinated, and then moved away and isolated till there is no possible danger of their spreading the contagion."

"Miss Dora — no, I mean Sister Doctor. — Beg pardon; I was thinking of Sister Dora! — you are absolutely exposing yourself needlessly."

"I do not intend to expose myself at all. I have had a little experience with the disease, and, at any rate, I have the theories. Will you tell Mrs. Fuller what the matter is with Mary, and that, on account of her other children, they must all go away? Do you know where they could go?"

"I will speak to Mrs. Fuller, and she may possibly know of some relative to whom she may go, though that is very doubtful;" and Dr. Graham left the room for that purpose.

Patience looked around the room, made her plans for the next week or two, while she would be a prisoner in the wretched place, gave Mary a glass of water, and then went into the kitchen. Dr. Graham had already told Mrs. Fuller of this new and fearful calamity that had befallen her, but the poor woman seemed to have endured so many and so often, repeated strokes of adversity, that she had become benumbed, and one more or less made scant impression.

"Yes," she was saying, "my sister lives all alone, and I know she will let me have one room," and the poor soul was already gathering up her scanty belongings.

"You must all be vaccinated before you go," said Dr. Preston. "I do not think there is much danger that they have contracted the disease yet, do you, Dr. Graham? but we must be on the safe side," and she quickly had the youngest child's arm exposed, and, while the little fellow looked on with wide-open eyes and wondered what the unusual proceeding meant, she had deftly performed the operation, and covered the spot with a bit of court plaster. The others were treated in the same manner. Mrs. Fuller's arm showed a good

"scar," and so she was comparatively safe; but Patience vaccinated her again. The children had never been vaccinated before.

"Have they been much in the room with Mary?" asked Dr. Graham.

"No; Mary had such a misery in her head she couldn't bear the noise, and I kept them out all I could," said Mrs. Fuller.

"So much the better," answered Patience. "Now, Mrs. Fuller, how far does your sister live from here?"

"Just down at the next corner."

"Then run down now and see if you can move there."

Mrs. Fuller threw a little shawl over her head and went out.

"Miss Doctor, do you propose to stay here alone day and night?"

"No, not alone. I propose to stay here with Mary," and Patience smiled. "I will make arrangements with mother to have Sally bring my meals to the gate three times a day. I will let Mrs. Fuller come and make the fire in the kitchen every morning, but she is not to see Mary or stay in the house. And I think you will come once a

day and peep in upon me and see if I need any advice or help."

"You must have some place to rest, if you persist in staying here."

"I will have a cot, a pillow and a blanket sent from home; also a lamp and some books; and I will improve the time by reading up on certain subjects that I am anxious to study."

Mrs. Fuller came in. "Yes, we can go. Betty is making a fire now in her summer kitchen. It is better than this room. Here, children, take these things and carry over to Aunt Betty's;" and she filled their arms with clothes and bedding.

"Mrs. Fuller, you understand that you and your children are to keep by yourselves in the house, and are not to go out at all, except that you are to come here every morning," said Dr. Graham.

"Yes, sir," she replied meekly.

"Because if you do not you may spread this disease; and if I hear you are not keeping the children at home, I shall have to send you all to the poorhouse," continued Dr. Graham.

"Your sister can do anything you want done outside," said Patience. "Now, while you gather up the rest of your things, I will go home and

make my arrangements to come and stay. Don't go into Mary's room if she is quiet."

Dr. Graham looked in upon the patient a moment. She was tossing uneasily, and moaning, but was unconscious. Then he accompanied Patience to her office door.

"You may expect me to-morrow morning," he said, as he left her.

Mrs. Preston did not make a single objection to her daughter's plan. It seemed the right and only thing for Patience to do, and her mother would not make it harder for her by any complaints on her part. She found two warm wrappers for Patience to wear, and she could burn them when she was ready to come home. Sally prepared a tempting supper, to which Mrs. Preston and Patience sat down, after every thing was in readiness for the temporary flitting.

"Mother, Sally can take these things over when I go. And you can see, from the south chamber window, the Fuller kitchen door. If I need help at any time I will hang out a white signal. But you must not be anxious about me. I do not anticipate any trouble."

Still it was with an effort at cheerfulness that

Mrs. Preston finally said good-by to Patience as she went away to her self-imposed task.

The next ten days and nights seemed to Patience, after they had gone by, like a long drawn-out nightmare. Dr. Graham came to the door every day, but Patience would not allow him to come in. "You can do no good, and you may carry the contagion. At any rate, you owe it to your patients not to excite their fears. 'How is she?' No better; I don't think she will live. It is confluent small-pox. She had never been vaccinated. 'Anything you can do?' Yes; see that Mrs. Fuller and her children are looked after."

Mrs. Preston and Sally came to the gate three times a day, and brought nourishing food for Patience. She talked with them from the door, but kept them at a distance. Mrs. Preston could not fail to see that her daughter's face was growing thin and white under the ordeal, but she was powerless to help her in the fearful emergency, and could only hope and pray.

Every morning, when Patience first opened the kitchen door, she found a bouquet of fresh flowers, usually accompanied by tempting fruit. The attention — and she could not even imagine from

whom it came — pleased and touched her. She put the flowers in water, and stood them on the kitchen table, where they made the only bright spot in that plague-smitten hovel. Then she turned to her duties in the sick room.

The poor girl's face was swollen beyond all human semblance, and distorted in wild delirium. Often, with fever-born strength, she tried to escape from her bed, and it required all the power Patience possessed to keep her in it. Many times she had to struggle violently with the girl, and to hold the diseased, loathsome form enclosed tightly in her arms till the sufferer's excitement quieted, when she laid her down, exhausted, on her pillow.

The delirium was frightful to witness ; the delirious cries heart-rending to hear. Incessantly she called for her mother, till Patience could not restrain her tears. When Patience could quiet her in no other way, she sat down on the bed beside her, drew the girl's head into her lap, and sang to her. Something of the influence of the music penetrated even the diseased brain, for gradually the paroxysm died away, and the girl fell into a sleep that was only little less troubled than her half-waking moments.

So the days and nights dragged on. There was not the slightest hope of Mary's recovery. At last the end came. Patience was there alone. She knelt by the bed, and commended the parting soul to God's mercy. She straightened the form, and composed the disfigured features, and wrapped the body carefully in clean sheets, ready for the rude coffin and the hasty burial. Her white signal had brought her mother to the gate.

"It is all over, mother. Get Dr. Graham to send an undertaker with a plain coffin ; the burial must be at once. In two hours send Sally with a complete suit for me. She can leave it at the gate. Then have the little chamber ready for me — a good fire and plenty of warm water. I shall be at home in a few hours now."

There was a hurried funeral, or, rather, there was no funeral at all. With her own hands, Patience put the body in the coffin, the undertaker, meanwhile, standing out of doors with a camphor bottle at his nose. No one could blame the man. He had a dependent family. Dr. Graham came, but Patience kept him also outside. She put the lid on the coffin, and sprinkled it freely with disinfectants ; then the undertaker, with her assist-

ance, got it to the door. Dr. Graham helped put it into the hearse, and poor Mary Fuller, who had been so long looking forward to this visit at her childhood's home, was carried away, alone, to her burial. Rather, she had gone alone on her last, long journey, and her cast-off body was committed to the care of the earth, unwept and unmourned. What did it signify to her, after all?

Patience remained long enough to change her clothes, and to throw those she took off upon the pile of bedding that was on the front room floor. Over all she poured quantities of a disinfectant which she spilled liberally about the rooms. Dr. Graham was a member of the board of health; he would see that the premises were attended to.

And then she went home. She felt, as she walked outside of the gate, as if she had been a prisoner. Her head was dizzy, and she almost reeled in the street. She knew it was the reaction after such a strain, and also the loss of sleep, but she seemed to be in a dream. She went straight up to the little chamber. Her mother heard her, and went to the door.

"Don't come in yet, mother!" she called. She took a thorough bath, using every possible pre-

caution. Refreshed by this to some extent, she called her mother. "I think, mother dear, you had better only come to the door. Will you have Sally bring me up a cup of tea, and some toast? Then I will lie down and try to sleep, and you must not be frightened if I don't waken up till morning." She looked very weary and worn.

"I am thankful the ordeal is over, my brave child, and that you are home again! I hope you will be rested in a few days."

Sally brought the lunch, daintily served, and Patience drank the tea. The toast she could not touch. She put the salver outside the door, and then threw herself upon her bed, and that was the last of which she was conscious for weeks.

The next morning Mrs. Preston went early to her room. She entered quietly. Patience looked at her with wide-open eyes in which there was no gleam of recognition.

"Patience darling! Are you ill?"

There was no response, but the flushed face and hurried breathing told the story. Dr. Graham was at once sent for, and came quickly.

"I feared it! I feared it!" he exclaimed as soon as he went into her room.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE REALITY OF IT.

ANY one who has lived in a small town during an epidemic of any dreaded disease, can form some idea of the consternation produced in Eagle's Mere when it became known that there was a genuine case of that most feared of all contagious diseases, within its limits; and in Shanty Town, too, where the people were huddled together like sheep, and where it was not reasonable to expect any suitable degree of caution could be observed in regard to the spread of the contagion. There were none of the alleviations of the case that exist in a large city: no pest-house, no nurses or physicians set apart for such emergencies. It was seldom that a case occurred in the town, but when it did it was regarded in the light of a public calamity. Friend shunned friend when they met on the street, for fear of infection, and the panic that existed so long as any fear of the

disease remained, can hardly be imagined by the residents of a large city, who are accustomed to the constant presence of such diseases, but who know the public health is carefully guarded by competent authority.

It certainly was a great relief to the excitement and alarm when Dr. Graham made public Miss Preston's heroic resolve to prevent all possible spread of the contagion by shutting herself up with it. Self-preservation is Nature's first law, and it applies to the generous-hearted and the unselfish as well as to others. But, after the first sensation of relief, people began to appreciate the heroism and to exclaim at the self-imposed martyrdom, and, by degrees, to feel that the public exemption from what would be a very great public calamity, was being dearly purchased. In the darkness of night, when wild March winds raved, and moaned, and shrieked around the house, people who were snug and safe in their comfortable beds, remembered the brave young woman who, alone, was watching by the bedside of a delirious sufferer, struggling with her, perhaps even holding her diseased body by force. They could realize the loathsomeness of the disease, but to be shut up

with it, to have to minister with one's own hands to the patient — and in that wretched hovel!

But all their fancies combined could not have painted the reality as Patience saw it and experienced it.

The young people, when they met, spoke of Patience with bated breath. They had learned to admire and love her before; now they revered her beyond expression.

“Do you remember, Alice,” asked Miss Graham one day, “the time when Miss Preston said she could not believe in religion because its professors were so half-hearted? I did not think so much about it then, but I understand it better now. There is no half-heartedness in her religion; she is giving herself, heart, soul and body, in the cause.”

“Do you think she would have done it at that time if the same need had existed?”

“No, I do not. Father says she is devoted to her profession, but he is sure there is a deeper motive in this case. She is sacrificing herself for the good of others because she thinks it is her duty. Only with her duty seems to be privilege.”

“You remember she said if she could believe as

we professed to believe she was sure she could not do enough to show her love. Now she is proving the truth of what she said; and we girls ought to be ashamed of ourselves for our unwillingness to give up the least pleasure for the sake of the Master!"

"Yes, Alice, I am coming to feel that we ought to ask 'What can we do? what can we give up?' rather than 'What must we do? what must we give up?' I don't like to think how often I have said 'Oh! I don't think there is any harm in this or that, and I am going to do it,' instead of giving the benefit of the doubt to the other side."

"I have been doing that very thing all my life. I have been trying to find reasons why this particular pleasure was harmless, and that special amusement innocent, because I wanted to enjoy them. I do believe that if we feel the least doubt we ought to be glad to give up anything."

"It is just as Mr. Forrest says, Alice. We ought to serve the Master for Love's sake, and then we will consider all service privilege, and render it joyfully. It is so easy to do anything for one we love."

"Which reminds me, suppose we go over and

ask Mrs. Preston if there is anything we can do for her."

Mrs. Preston assured them that if they could send supplies of food and clothing to the Fullers it would be a most acceptable service, which they did at once, and continued to do so long as the necessity existed.

So, with most of the Eagle's Mere people, Dr. Preston was considered an "angel of mercy," a "Florence Nightingale," a "Sister Dora." But there were not wanting some sordid souls who had no appreciation of the heroism exhibited: "If she chooses to expose herself so foolishly, it is her own affair." "If she takes the disease and dies of it she has only herself to thank." "Probably she considers it very romantic. I have no patience with these women doctors, at any rate; they have too many notions and too little good solid sense." "Well, she's not so very young; she's thirty-three, if she's a day, and is old enough to do as she pleases, but I have no sympathy with such strange ideas."

To the credit of the profession be it said, every medical man in Eagle's Mere acknowledged that Miss Preston had taken the best possible course in

the emergency; they recognized the fact that, but for her prompt and heroic action, there must inevitably have been an epidemic of the disease, with all its attendant consequences. Nor did they underrate the actual danger to herself. They forgot all former prejudices, and spoke of her in terms of unmeasured praise. From that time she was on the same footing in the profession with themselves. Every stumbling-block was taken out of the way, and henceforth Dr. Preston, or any other qualified woman, could practice medicine in Eagle's Mere without let or hinderance from them.

While the path was being made clear and smooth for Dr. Preston's feet to walk in, one individual had come to the decided conclusion that, if he could prevent it, she should not henceforth incur such risks, nor take upon herself such duties and labors. She was not a romantic girl, in the first flush of enthusiastic womanhood, to be repressed by maturer minds. She was a mature woman herself, with all of a noble woman's capacity for self-forgetfulness, ready to devote her skill and experience, her strength and courage, when occasion required. She was entirely too unselfish; she needed some one to watch over her: to care for

her, to shield and protect her. She might practice her profession as much as she pleased, within reasonable bounds !

Mr. Forrest saw Dr. Graham every day while Patience was shut up in that dreadful house, and asked fully about the progress of the case. Dr. Graham comprehended the man's feelings towards Patience, but made no sign ; nor did Mr. Forrest send any message, save the flowers, to the faithful watcher in the sick room. The flowers at least would cheer her prison for a moment. He would bide his time to make known his heart.

And then, when all was over, and Mary Fuller's body taken to its last resting place, Mr. Forrest, and her many other friends, were shocked to hear that Patience herself was ill. Shocked, though not surprised. They besieged Dr. Graham for his opinion.

"No ; I can't decide yet. It may be and it may not be. She is worn out with the fatigue and the nervous strain." This he said outside.

To Mrs. Preston : "Has your daughter had any unusual or great anxieties upon her mind these past few months ? If so, that will account, in part, for her condition."

"Yes ; oh ! yes," replied Mrs. Preston, with a

heavy sigh, as she thought of all they had both endured. "Yes; but that anxiety was removed just before she went to take care of Mary Fuller."

"The effect still remained in a depressed state of the system that made her less able to endure the dreadful ordeal she has gone through. Why, I tell you, Mrs. Preston, a strong man could hardly have borne it. I used to feel ashamed of myself when I would waken up at night and think how I was permitting Miss Doctor to stay alone with that girl; and it was one of the worst cases I ever knew, too. But, you see, if I helped take care of her I must give up all my other patients, and I have some that I could not safely leave, nor yet turn over to another physician. You know how people feel about these things?"

"I do not see, Dr. Graham, how you could have done differently from what you have. But I hope and pray the disease may spread no further!" This was the day he was called in to see Patience.

Two days afterward he said to his daughter, "Miss Doctor has brain fever; perhaps something else may develop later. I have given up my other patients to Dr. Moorhead."

This looked ominous.

During the next week there was much serious thinking on the part of the young people in Eagle's Mere. The problems of life and death came home to them as seldom before. If her work was ended, yet it could not be said that the few months Patience had spent here had been in vain. She had, at least, set in motion a train of thoughts and feelings and purposes that would go on, and on, even reaching forward through all the eternities. Quietly it had been done, unconsciously for the most part, and this last crowning act of self-sacrifice had set the seal to the reality of her religion. There had been no half-heartedness in her following of the Divine Leader!

In the light of her Christian bravery the glamour was removed from mere passing pleasures. Life seemed too sacred and solemn to spend in seeking to amuse one's self merely. There were grand duties to be performed, sacrifices to make, crosses to be borne; not in the spirit with which one serves a hard and unfeeling task-master, but willingly, gladly, joyfully. Yes; life was full of glorious possibilities, and the highest and most enduring happiness would come in sincerely seeking to know the Master's will, and to do it.

During those anxious days and nights many an earnest prayer went up from hearts that had seldom prayed except for themselves. Instinctively it seemed to be recognized that there was nothing else they could do.

Meanwhile, in her darkened chamber, Patience was living over, in her delirium, the dreadful scenes in Mary Fuller's sick room. Sometimes she fancied herself struggling with the poor girl, and would beg her to lie down quietly in the bed, so that she would not take cold. Again she was praying earnestly for the soul that had passed beyond earthly aid, and imploring the pitiful Saviour to prepare it for its journey out into the unknown and untried world of spirits. Dr. Graham and Mrs. Preston, listening to these fancies which were memories, gained some idea of what Patience had experienced within those closed doors.

Every one drew a breath of relief when, after a few days, Dr. Graham announced positively, "Miss Doctor has brain fever only. 'Will she get well?' I cannot say. The issues of life and death are not in my hands. She is very, very ill."

So, after all, she had not escaped danger. The sense of relief was sadly mingled with anxiety.

CHAPTER XXVII.

DILLAYE PRESTON.

MAY had come to Eagle's Mere. Hillsides and field and forest were in all the beauty and bravery of their first verdure. Even the sombre old pines seemed to have decked themselves in a lighter shade of green, suitable to the season. The little lake sparkled and glowed in the sunlight, and reflected in its clear waters the trees that caressingly overhung its margin, the clouds that floated in the sky above it, and the moon that made a bridge of shining, quivering silver across it at night.

With May came also a stranger to Eagle's Mere, who inquired the way to Mrs. Preston's cottage. People who met him looked twice at him, there was something so familiar, and yet so strange in his face. He resembled Patience to a marvelous degree of likeness. He could not be much older than she, perhaps as old as Mr. Forrest, but

his hair, which was short, was also of a snowy whiteness. His face was unutterably sad; not a sadness that seemed natural, but acquired. All the animation and sparkle and joy that it once must have possessed had gone out of it. He looked like a man who had experienced great disappointment or crushing sorrow. Clearly there was a history behind that face; the most careless observer would divine so much at a glance.

Later it was learned that it was Dillaye Preston, and he was Miss Preston's brother; older than she by only a year. Patience made known these facts when she introduced him, with much fondness, to her friends.

For Patience, though she went down so near the dark river that its waters seemed to lave her feet, yet came back again to her friends and her work. And now, almost before she is able to bear the joy, she welcomes her brother. "He is an artist," she explains to Mr. Forrest, after presenting the two to each other, "and his artistic eye is discovering new beauties around Eagle's Mere at every turn. I expect he will give his brush very little rest."

She was sitting beside her brother, looking very

thin and white, but oh ! inexpressibly happy, as she gave his hand an affectionate caress.

"It must be delightful for you all to be together, Mr. Preston," said Mr. Forrest.

"It is, it is," and Mr. Preston dropped his sister's hand and arose and walked to the window. He seemed to be strangely moved. Mrs. Preston soon went quietly and stood beside him, with her hand placed affectionately on his shoulder.

"Do you see that little bit of the lake?" she asked. "I want you to make a picture of it for me, some day. I used to go there to read your letters." His arm stole around his mother's slender waist, and his head bowed tenderly over hers till his face rested on her soft hair.

As the days went on, the people became accustomed to seeing the grave young man, with the sad face and prematurely white hair, climbing the hills with his easel and paint box, or sitting beside the lake on a camp-stool, with his easel before him, and painting diligently. He seemed to have a passion for his art, and every hour of daylight was improved. As he finished his pictures — some of them were merely studies, to be completed at another time — Patience put them up in her office,

where they excited great interest, and drew out much commendation.

But, except through his paintings, no one made any progress in his acquaintance. He always went to church with his mother, carefully supporting her on his arm, and accompanied by Patience. He often took long walks with Patience, going with her to the homes of her distant patients, and waiting outside till she came out. He drove with his mother, taking her to see the lovely spots around Eagle's Mere, which his artist's eye had discovered, but which she was not strong enough to walk to. To her and to Patience he was all devotion.

But he was never seen apart from them. He never visited the Reading Room, except with Patience, nor did he go to any of those places where men alone congregate. He seemed to have no interest in life aside from his mother, Patience, and his art.

Sometimes, though rarely, Mr. Forrest was able to draw him into conversation when they were all seated in the cosy office together. In this way Mr. Forrest learned that he had been abroad. He had travelled extensively. He had visited all the

famous art-galleries of Europe, and remembered what he had seen. He had painted in Paris and Rome, in Florence and Munich. But these memories, though evidently fresh and vivid, never seemed to give him any pleasure. His face never lighted up with the graphically-told reminiscences; never lost its habitual sadness.

One day, it was the latter part of May, Mr. Forrest had called at the office for a few moments. Patience was alone. "Congratulate me," he said.

"I think I should congratulate her," Patience answered, smiling.

"'Her!' Who? I don't comprehend;" and he evidently did not.

"If you cannot tell who the happy individual is, I am sure I cannot, Mr. Forrest."

"Yes; I understand now. But you are laboring under a slight misapprehension. My dear, long-absent brother is coming home from Arizona very soon; he is on his way here now."

"Then I do congratulate you most heartily, but I did not even know you had a brother."

"Miss Preston, is it possible you have heard so little gossip that you have never heard Miss Graham is engaged to my brother?"

A great light dawned upon Patience. She could comprehend much that had been till then mysterious. She could read between the lines now, and what she read made her face flush involuntarily. She glanced at Mr. Forrest; he was gazing intently at her, with a meaning in his eyes she had never seen there before.

And then was told the old, old story, as old as Eden, yet new to every generation, and which will be as blissfully new to the latest born of earth as it was to Adam and Eve in Paradise.

Mr. Forrest talked in a straightforward, manly way. He was no sentimental boy, sighing and whispering vows whose meaning he could not begin to fathom. He was in the maturity of a noble manhood, and his love for Patience was not a mere gush of momentary sentiment. He had been attracted by her from his first acquaintance, and the feeling had grown stronger with every new insight he had gained into her character and the ruling motives of her life. At first he had been somewhat restrained by the feeling that her profession had necessarily set her apart from her sex, and that it must inevitably come between her and her husband, if she ever married.

But in these later days he had quite lost his fears in that regard. Her devotion to duty had shown him that she would not be found lacking in any relation in life that she might assume. He was no longer terrified at the idea that, if he married her, his identity would be lost in "Dr. Preston's husband!" Even the modest sign that swung in the wind before her office door, bearing the legend "Patience Preston, M. D.," had lost all terrors for him now. If she would but consent to marry him, she might put anything she chose on her sign. Only, if she gave him the right, he would insist that she should not wear herself out by her professional duties.

Patience was surprised at his declaration of love, and frankly told him so.

"Mr. Forrest, I assure you I have, till this hour, supposed you were engaged to Miss Graham, so you must believe that the honor you have shown me is absolutely a surprise, and you can hardly expect me to reply to you at once."

"I can easily understand how you may have received that impression. But answer one question, please: Has any one else a prior claim upon your affections?"

“No, and yes. No one person, but many persons. Let me explain. I owe it to you, after what you have told me, to be equally frank with you. I am devoted to my profession. I have been so ever since I entered it, but I hope a higher motive has been added to my love for it since I came here. I acknowledge that I have said some foolish things about being wedded to it. I have said and felt that ‘I would rather make a name than marry one’; that I did not ‘want my name graven on my tombstone as Mr. Blank’s relict;’ and other equally brilliant remarks I have been guilty of. The element of personal ambition was once very strong in me, and had its full share in the enthusiasm of my profession. But I have been punished for it—sorely punished; and though I was for a long time very rebellious and unrecconciled, I came at last to accept the punishment as needful for my own best good. Now I hope a better motive has been substituted in its place, but I am still passionately fond of my chosen work, and you understand that I mean my patients have a prior claim upon me.”

“But, Miss Preston, this is not your final answer? The idea is new to you, and you must

think of it longer. I will not ask you to consider how much my own happiness is involved in your decision. I should be unworthy to ask such a blessing as your love if I were not capable of ignoring my personal feelings should necessity require. But do you think I would be a hindrance to you in your work? Could we not labor together for the good of the suffering and the poor? I do not think I should be jealous of your patients. I might — who knows? — even study medicine under your tuition, and become your assistant!" he added, with a smile. "I made such progress in microscopy that I am vain enough to believe that, with close attention, I might make even a more brilliant record in medicine."

Patience laughed pleasantly. Mr. Forrest noticed that her face was regaining its old fullness and color, and the dimple near the corner of her mouth, that had been missing since her sickness, began to show itself when she smiled.

He went on: "I am selfish in this matter, I confess frankly. I ask more than I can give; — not of love, for I should be satisfied if you could love me half as much as I love you; but I know you would sacrifice much in marrying.

I can promise you that I would carefully protect you from yourself, which is the direction in which you need to be protected."

"Do I?"

"At least in a time of threatened epidemic you do."

"Well, Mr. Forrest, I tell you plainly, I have never intended to marry. I confess there have been many times when it has seemed to me that to be shut in a home of my own, tenderly cared for and protected by one who loved me, would be the happiest existence I could conceive of; and then, in such moments, how I have envied those blessed wives who were shielded from all contact with the rude, outer world! But those were my hours of weariness and weakness; and when I had fully rested myself I was always more in love with my profession, and my freedom, than ever."

"You are young now, Miss Preston. As you grow older these moments of weakness and weariness will come oftener."

"I know it."

"I am not going to urge this matter further now. We shall be on the same friendly terms as before I made my confession to you; shall we not?"

“Indeed, Mr. Forrest, I should miss a very large part of the happiness out of my life if we were on less friendly terms.”

The amount of encouragement this reply gave to Mr. Forrest he did not indicate by his manner, but he did not go home altogether hopeless after Patience had said, —

“I promise you to think this over seriously, and if I decide that I can give love for love, I will tell you. Nothing less would satisfy you or me — or the Master.”

CHAPTER XXVIII.

“GUIDED IN JUDGMENT.”

SUMMER came. Patience was very busy again. The heroism shown at poor Mary Fuller's bedside had given her immense popularity among the class of people to which the Fullers belonged. Few of them could afford to pay their physician, but that consideration seldom prevented them from sending for her, as it never prevented her from responding to their calls.

Her practice had extended, also, into the higher social zones, and she had fully her share of work to do ; in fact, more than she was really strong enough for. The other physicians never forgot her splendid behavior in the trying emergency, and how she had saved the town from a panic, if not from an epidemic. All prejudice against her was a thing of the past. They consulted with her gladly, and gave her opinions most respectful consideration. They were obliged to acknowledge that what she

lacked in years and experience she made up by knowledge of all the latest advances in medical science, and by close and patient study, added to which was a wonderful gift of correct and quick diagnosis. They might explain it away by calling it womanly instinct, or intuition, if they pleased, but the fact remained, and they were often happy to avail themselves of it.

The question was being discussed at Mrs. Preston's cottage, whether they should continue to make Eagle's Mere their home. They had come there almost by chance, if there is such a thing as chance. They had regarded their stay as only temporary. There was now no reason why they should not go back to New York, or to some large city. All of their plans, till within the past year, had pre-supposed that Patience would practice in the city. Her education peculiarly fitted her for a wider field than she could find in Eagle's Mere.

"The matter rests with you, Patience," Mrs. Preston was saying. "I know you have had many obstacles to contend against here. Your work has been that of a pioneer; but I think that stage of it is past. The way is clear now for yourself or any

other woman ; so you may satisfy your conscience on that score. Whatever you decide to be best for yourself, we will coincide in."

"Indeed, mother, you have fully as much right — far more right — to be consulted as to your wishes."

"Your wishes are mine, in this matter, Patience."

"But, Dillaye, you have not expressed yourself. Are you contented in this out-of-the-way place?"

"'Contented!' It is Heaven to be with you and mother."

"At any rate, mother, we need not at once decide this question. We could not find a more pleasant place for the summer, and I have enough to do to keep me busy, and I am, at least, gaining experience."

"More experience than gold, I fancy," said Dillaye. "I am afraid you are working too hard."

"I think you had better take a little of that sympathy to yourself, Dillaye," said Patience. "You are never idle. I believe you sleep with your brush in your hand. Are you sure you don't get up and paint in your sleep?"

"Patience," said her brother sadly, "I ought to

keep constantly employed, so as to make up for lost time. You have lost no time."

"And you are more than making up for all you have lost, my dear boy," said his mother warmly. "Patience," she added, "you left a good paying practice in New York, you must remember. As far as the profits of your profession are concerned, don't you think you could do better there than here? You must look at all sides of the question."

"You never can go back to a place, after any length of time has passed, and begin where you left off. Nothing has stood still in New York since we came away. My old patients are scattered. They have probably forgotten my existence. If I go back, I must start at the very beginning again; all my previous practice there will count for nothing in making a new start. And yet, I confess it, I have a great fondness for the rush and the roar, the hurry and bustle of a large city. I love its greater opportunities, and its broader outlook, and its fuller life. I have often rebelled at the narrowness and the quiet of this Eagle's Mere, but not lately."

"For one thing, Patience, the scenery around

here compensates for many privations," said Dil-
laye.

"Well, you certainly have found out every charming bit around here! By the way, it is time to hear from the picture you sent on to New York, is it not?" And then the conversation drifted away to other subjects.

It was Mrs. Preston who read, in a few days, an item in a New York paper regarding the "Summer Art Exhibition":

"We must specially mention a landscape by an artist who modestly withholds his name. It represents a tiny lake in a mountain country. Dark pines clothe the hills, coming down, in places, to the water's edge. The sky above is filled with fleecy clouds, which are reproduced in the mirroring water. In a shaded nook near the lake, in the foreground of the picture, sits a woman clad in black, in an attitude of the profoundest sadness. Her face is turned away, but in her hand she holds a letter, which she evidently has just taken from the long yellow envelope in her lap. The picture attracts one from the first, and is a marvelous composition. Presumably there is a story back of it. We predict a future for the artist."

"O, my son, my son!" sobbed Mrs. Preston.
"Can nothing purchase forgetfulness?"

So the summer wore itself away. The heat was tempered by the pure mountain breezes. The days were long and golden. The sky was blue as ever Italy's much praised skies, or flecked with soft white fleecy clouds that piled themselves fantastically on the mountain summits, and dropped down blessings on the valleys below. The nights were miracles of beauty, whether under the solemn silent stars or the clear bright moon.

The artist soul of Dillaye Preston drank in all this beauty. Something in it appealed to his bruised spirit with sweet and soothing effect. He was still young, despite his white hairs, and it was not too late to retrieve the past and make himself a name in the world.

No, he did not care for a name; that ambition was dead. But he could in some degree atone for past errors, and, for his mother's sake, and for his sister's sake, he would do the best that was in his power.

That best was even better than he fancied, and all his surroundings at Eagle's Mere developed it. He worked patiently, steadily, tirelessly. Gradu-

ally a change came over him, which he was unconscious of, but which Mrs. Preston welcomed with tears of thanksgiving. A happier look grew into his thin face. The lines of premature age and crushing sorrow were disappearing, and he was less silent and reserved in his casual meeting with his sister's or his mother's friends. The young people, who at first could not understand him, and were almost afraid of him, found him a most genial and entertaining companion when he sometimes forgot himself and took an interested part in their conversation.

"Yes ; I am quite contented here. I do not care to go back into the great world again, mother. Here I have found quiet, and a measure of forgetfulness, and work enough to occupy me till the end of my days." This was said late in the summer. Later still, but long before he dreamed such a thing possible, or even cared for the possibility, he found reputation in his art. The pictures he painted in that mountain retreat, and sent on to the city, carried with them a living message from Nature's heart, which appealed to the most careless observer, and the artist speedily became recognized as one of Nature's most skillful interpreters.

Thenceforward his future was secure, as far as his work was concerned.

Meanwhile, throughout that entire summer, Patience debated the question whether she should remain in Eagle's Mere or return to New York. All the strong ties of early habits and education, tastes, preferences, and acquirements, drew her back strongly to the city. On the other hand, there were many potent reasons for staying in Eagle's Mere. Much was involved in her decision, and she daily prayed to be "guided in judgment."

Another year has gone by, and it is once more May. One more look at Eagle's Mere before we leave it.

Mrs. Preston's cottage — but the little sign no longer swings before it. "Patience Preston, M. D.," has gone from the vine-covered home that had become such a favorite place of gathering for the young people who had learned to love her so well, and to reverence her so sincerely.

Yes ; we can go in.

Mrs. Preston and Dillaye are still here, but the office is now a studio, and its walls are hung with pictures of well-known places near Eagle's Mere.

“Yes, it is hard to be separated from Patience, for we had grown very closely together ; but I am satisfied, for I know she is happy, and I should be very ungrateful to complain,” Mrs. Preston explains ; “and Dillaye is quite spoiling me with his care and tenderness.” She smiles fondly upon the artist, who has changed almost beyond recognition. It is plain that haunting memories have ceased to crush him. The strong young manhood that is in him is asserting itself.

“The Reading Room?”

We can visit it, also.

The library has received many additions since the books were first put in place. It has overflowed into several additional book-cases. Some one whispers that these cases are the work of the bashful young man Patience so kindly noticed on that eventful New Year’s day : eventful to him, because it turned his thoughts into new channels, and started his feet on an upward path.

The class in microscopy is still in a flourishing condition, and has a large number of members. At present the young men are giving their investigations a practical turn. They are studying the native woods of the region, with a view to deter-

mining their relative value for various mechanical and economic purposes. By placing transverse and longitudinal sections of the wood under the powerful glass, its adaptability or non-adaptability for the required purpose is easily discovered.

Take a look into the glass yourself. That minute fragment of wood seems like every other fragment on the slides till it is placed under the glass.

"Why, it is as loose and porous as a sponge," you exclaim.

"Not very suitable for building purposes," explains the dignified young man who is manipulating the glass, and who bears a striking resemblance to the very modest young man referred to. "Not very suitable for building purposes, unless you want it for interior finishing, to be saturated with oil. Then the pores would be an advantage, as they would take up such a quantity of the oil used in the finishing. Now look at this;" and, slipping another slide in place, you see a compact, firm growth, that must indicate a wood of great hardness and toughness.

"Oak," he answers, as you look inquiringly at him. "Of course we know the value of oak without this glass, but there are other woods here that

have been comparatively little used, and we are just learning their worth.”

If it occurs to you that there is a great spiritual truth in this remark, and that lying unrecognized all around us are materials waiting to be built into God’s temple, whose value we have hitherto overlooked, been ignorant of, or despised, then you will have learned a valuable lesson from that microscope.

In addition to the class in microscopy one has been formed in geology and mineralogy. The country is peculiarly adapted to make the study interesting, as the out-cropping rocks are full of fossil casts and remains, while the mountains are already becoming famous for their various valuable deposits of minerals and metals. The young men are collecting cabinets, and are proud of their success.

“Very tame amusements?”

“Very dull recreation?”

Yes: far more quiet than the saloons; duller than the pool rooms; tamer than the variety theatres. Granted.

“Only a straw in the Niagara of vice and dissipation?”

Granted again. But if human wit and wisdom, and human strength, can lay but a straw in the downward way — if it be done in the fear of God and for the love of immortal souls, he, seeing the motive, may make that straw a barrier between some soul and perdition. We are not responsible for results. God attends to that part of the work ; but he places the means in our hands, and, whether weak or weighty to our human seeing, we must use them to the utmost limit of our ability.

No ; the Reading Room is not a church, and the scientific classes are not Bible classes ; but influences have been felt in that place that have led young men to the Church, and to the devout study of God's word as well as his works.

The Master has many vineyards, and many harvest fields, and he who dresses the vine must not say to the tiller of the wheat field, "Why labor you there? Come here into the vineyard ;" and he who sows in the harvest field must not say to the vine dresser, "Lo, this is the Master's field ! Leave your vines and come hither : " for the earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof.

We must go a little further before we leave Eagle's Mere, this place so beautiful for situation.

Right there, — at the very social north pole, so to speak, — on the most delightful spot within the favored circle, stands a new, modern-style house. Everything around it denotes not only wealth, but refined taste. We have never seen the house before ; it must have been erected since last year.

Walk slowly by. A modest silver plate on the door, bears the name Forrest.

But what does that other plate beside the door mean ? Can you read it ?

PATIENCE FORREST, M. D.

Dorothy Thorn is a first-class American novel.

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There is hardly a less promising condition out of which to write a novel than having a hobby to ride; and of hobbies what can be less picturesque than the question how we who work and we who direct are going to get on together harmoniously?

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